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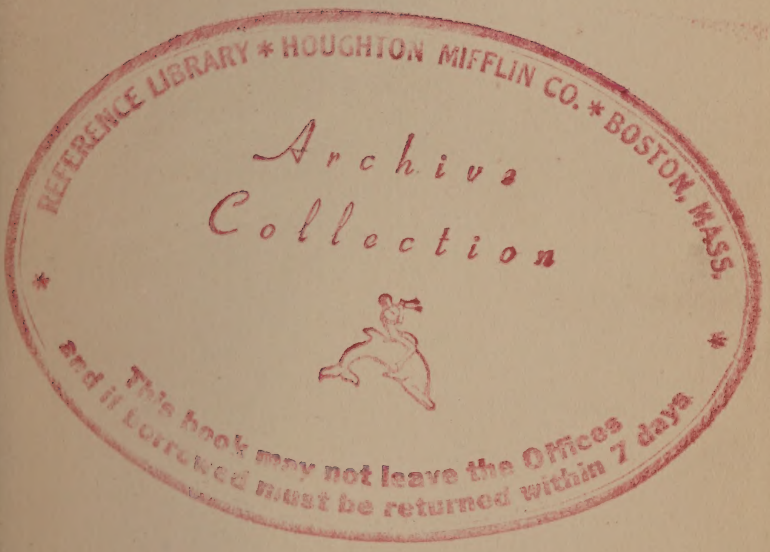
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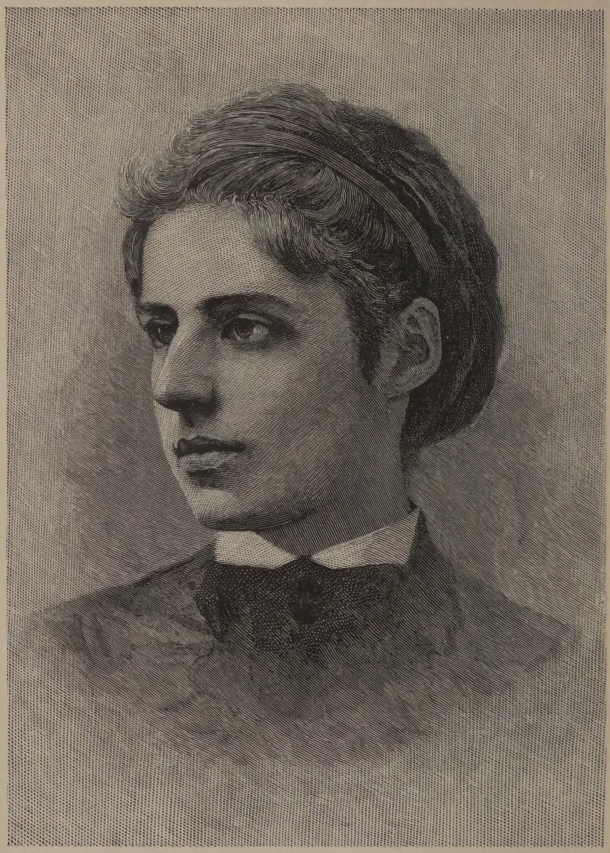

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Emma Lazarus.

THE POEMS

OF

EMMA LAZARUS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

NARRATIVE, LYRIC, AND DRAMATIC

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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Thanks are due to the Editors of "The Century," Lippincott's Magazine, and "The Critic," for their courtesy in allowing the poems published by them to be reprinted in these pages.

EMMA LAZARUS.[1]

BORN JULY 22, 1849; DIED NOVEMBER 19, 1887.

ONE hesitates to lift the veil and throw the light upon a life so hidden and a personality so withdrawn as that of Emma Lazarus; but while her memory is fresh, and the echo of her songs still lingers in these pages, we feel it a duty to call up her presence once more, and to note the traits that made it remarkable and worthy to shine out clearly before the world. Of dramatic episode or climax in her life there is none; outwardly all was placid and serene, like an untroubled stream whose depths alone hold the strong, quick tide. The story of her life is the story of a mind, of a spirit, ever seeking, ever striving, and pressing onward and upward to new truth and light. Her works are the mirror of this progress. In reviewing them, the first point that strikes us is the precocity, or rather the spontaneity, of her poetic gift. She was a born singer; poetry was her natural language, and to write was less effort than to speak, for she was a shy, sensitive child, with strange reserves and reticences, not easily putting herself *en rapport*

[1] Written for *The Century Magazine.*

with those around her. Books were her world from her earliest years; in them she literally lost and found herself. She was eleven years old when the War of Secession broke out, which inspired her first lyric outbursts. Her poems and translations written between the ages of fourteen and seventeen were collected, and constituted her first published volume. Crude and immature as these productions naturally were, and utterly condemned by the writer's later judgment, they are, nevertheless, highly interesting and characteristic, giving, as they do, the keynote of much that afterwards unfolded itself in her life. One cannot fail to be rather painfully impressed by the profound melancholy pervading the book. The opening poem is "In Memoriam," — on the death of a school friend and companion; and the two following poems also have death for theme. "On a Lock of my Mother's Hair" gives us reflections on growing old. These are the four poems written at the age of fourteen. There is not a wholly glad and joyous strain in the volume, and we might smile at the recurrence of broken vows, broken hearts, and broken lives in the experience of this maiden just entered upon her teens, were it not that the innocent child herself is in such deadly earnest. The two long narrative poems, "Bertha" and "Elfrida," are also tragic in the extreme. Both are dashed off apparently at white heat: "Elfrida,"

over fifteen hundred lines of blank verse, in two weeks; "Bertha," in three and a half. We have said that Emma Lazarus was a born singer, but she did not sing, like a bird, for joy of being alive; and of being young, alas! there is no hint in these youthful effusions, except inasmuch as this unrelieved gloom, this ignorance of "values," so to speak, is a sign of youth, common especially among gifted persons of acute and premature sensibilities, whose imagination, not yet focused by reality, overreaches the mark. With Emma Lazarus, however, this sombre streak has a deeper root; something of birth and temperament is in it, — the stamp and heritage of a race born to suffer. But dominant and fundamental though it was, Hebraism was only latent thus far. It was classic and romantic art that first attracted and inspired her. She pictures Aphrodite the beautiful, arising from the waves, and the beautiful Apollo and his loves, — Daphne, pursued by the god, changing into the laurel, and the enamored Clytie into the faithful sunflower. Beauty, for its own sake, supreme and unconditioned, charmed her primarily and to the end. Her restless spirit found repose in the pagan idea, — the absolute unity and identity of man with nature, as symbolized in the Greek myths, where every natural force becomes a person, and where, in turn, persons pass with equal readiness and freedom back into nature again.

In this connection a name would suggest itself even if it did not appear, — Heine the Greek, Heine the Jew, Heine the Romanticist, as Emma Lazarus herself has styled him; and already in this early volume of hers we have trace of the kinship and affinity that afterwards so plainly declared itself. Foremost among the translations are a number of his songs, rendered with a finesse and a literalness that are rarely combined. Four years later, at the age of twenty-one, she published her second volume, "Admetus and Other Poems," which at once took rank as literature both in America and England, and challenged comparison with the work of established writers. Of classic themes we have "Admetus" and "Orpheus," and of romantic the legend of Tannhäuser and of the saintly Lohengrin. All are treated with an artistic finish that shows perfect mastery of her craft, without detracting from the freshness and flow of her inspiration. While sounding no absolutely new note in the world, she yet makes us aware of a talent of unusual distinction, and a highly endowed nature, — a sort of tact of sentiment and expression, an instinct of the true and beautiful, and that quick intuition which is like second-sight in its sensitiveness to apprehend and respond to external stimulus. But it is not the purely imaginative poems in this volume that most deeply interest us. We come upon experience of life in these

pages; not in the ordinary sense, however, of outward activity and movement, but in the hidden undercurrent of being. "The epochs of our life are not in the visible facts, but in the silent thoughts by the wayside as we walk." This is the motto, drawn from Emerson, which she chooses for her poem of "Epochs," which marks a pivotal moment in her life. Difficult to analyze, difficult above all to convey, if we would not encroach upon the domain of private and personal experience, is the drift of this poem, or rather cycle of poems, that ring throughout with a deeper accent and a more direct appeal than has yet made itself felt. It is the drama of the human soul, — "the mystic winged and flickering butterfly," "flitting between earth and sky," in its passage from birth to death.

A golden morning of June! "Sweet empty sky without a stain." Sunlight and mist and "ripple of rain-fed rills." "A murmur and a singing manifold."

> "What simple things be these the soul to raise
> To bounding joy, and make young pulses beat
> With nameless pleasure, finding life so sweet!"

Such is youth, a June day, fair and fresh and tender with dreams and longing and vague desire. The morn lingers and passes, but the noon has not reached its height before the clouds begin to rise, the sunshine dies, the air grows thick and

heavy, the lightnings flash, the thunder breaks among the hills, rolls and gathers and grows, until

> "Behold, yon bolt struck home,
> And over ruined fields the storm hath come."

Now we have the phases of the soul, — the shock and surprise of grief in the face of the world made desolate. Loneliness and despair for a space, and then, like stars in the night, the new births of the spirit, the wonderful outcoming from sorrow: the mild light of patience at first; hope and faith kindled afresh in the very jaws of evil; the new meaning and worth of life beyond sorrow, beyond joy; and finally duty, the holiest word of all, that leads at last to victory and peace. The poem rounds and completes itself with the close of "the long, rich day," and the release of

> "The mystic winged and flickering butterfly,
> A human soul, that drifts at liberty,
> Ah! who can tell to what strange paradise,
> To what undreamed-of fields and lofty skies!"

We have dwelt at some length upon this poem, which seems to us, in a certain sense, subjective and biographical; but upon closer analysis there is still another conclusion to arrive at. In "Epochs" we have, doubtless, the impress of a calamity brought very near to the writer, and profoundly working upon her sensibilities; not however by direct, but by reflex action, as it

were, and through sympathetic emotion, — the emotion of the deeply-stirred spectator, of the artist, the poet who lives in the lives of others, and makes their joys and their sorrows his own.

Before dismissing this volume we may point out another clue as to the shaping of mind and character. The poem of "Admetus" is dedicated "to my friend Ralph Waldo Emerson." Emma Lazarus was between seventeen and eighteen years of age when the writings of Emerson fell into her hands, and it would be difficult to over-estimate the impression produced upon her. As she afterwards wrote: "To how many thousand youthful hearts has not his word been the beacon — nay, more, the guiding star — that led them safely through periods of mental storm and struggle!" Of no one is this more true than of herself. Left, to a certain extent, without compass or guide, without any positive or effective religious training, this was the first great moral revelation of her life. We can easily realize the chaos and ferment of an over-stimulated brain, steeped in romantic literature, and given over to the wayward leadings of the imagination. Who can tell what is true, what is false, in a world where fantasy is as real as fact? Emerson's word fell like truth itself, "a shaft of light shot from the zenith," a golden rule of thought and action. His books were bread and

wine to her, and she absorbed them into her very being. She felt herself invincibly drawn to the master, "that fount of wisdom and goodness," and it was her great privilege during these years to be brought into personal relations with him. From the first he showed her a marked interest and sympathy, which became for her one of the most valued possessions of her life. He criticised her work with the fine appreciation and discrimination that made him quick to discern the quality of her talent as well as of her personality, and he was no doubt attracted by her almost transparent sincerity and singleness of soul, as well as by the simplicity and modesty that would have been unusual even in a person not gifted. He constituted himself, in a way, her literary mentor, advised her as to the books she should read and the attitude of mind she should cultivate. For some years he corresponded with her very faithfully; his letters are full of noble and characteristic utterances, and give evidence of a warm regard that in itself was a stimulus and a high incentive. But encouragement even from so illustrious a source failed to elate the young poetess, or even to give her a due sense of the importance and value of her work, or the dignity of her vocation. We have already alluded to her modesty, but there was something more than modesty in her unwillingness to assert herself or claim any prerogative, — something even morbid and exagger-

ated, which we know not how to define, whether as over-sensitiveness or indifference. Once finished, the heat and glow of composition spent, her writings apparently ceased to interest her. She often resented any allusion to them on the part of intimate friends, and the public verdict as to their excellence could not reassure or satisfy her. The explanation is not far, perhaps, to seek. Was it not the "Ewig-Weibliche" that allows no prestige but its own? Emma Lazarus was a true woman, too distinctly feminine to wish to be exceptional, or to stand alone and apart, even by virtue of superiority.

A word now as to her life and surroundings. She was one of a family of seven, and her parents were both living. Her winters were passed in New York, and her summers by the sea. In both places her life was essentially quiet and retired. The success of her book had been mainly in the world of letters. In no wise tricked out to catch the public eye, her writings had not yet made her a conspicuous figure, but were destined slowly to take their proper place and give her the rank that she afterwards held.

For some years now almost everything that she wrote was published in "Lippincott's Magazine," then edited by John Foster Kirk, and we shall still find in her poems the method and movement of her life. Nature is still the fount and mirror, reflecting, and again reflected, in the

soul. We have picture after picture, almost to satiety, until we grow conscious of a lack of substance and body and of vital play to the thought, as though the brain were spending itself in dreamings and reverie, the heart feeding upon itself, and the life choked by its own fullness without due outlet. Happily, however, the heavy cloud of sadness has lifted, and we feel the subsidence of waves after a storm. She sings "Matins:" —

"Does not the morn break thus,
Swift, bright, victorious,
With new skies cleared for us
Over the soul storm-tost?
Her night was long and deep,
Strange visions vexed her sleep,
Strange sorrows bade her weep,
Her faith in dawn was lost.

"No halt, no rest for her,
The immortal wanderer
From sphere to higher sphere
Toward the pure source of day.
The new light shames her fears,
Her faithlessness and tears,
As the new sun appears
To light her god-like way."

Nature is the perpetual resource and consolation. "'T is good to be alive!" she says, and why? Simply,

"To see the light
That plays upon the grass, to feel (and sigh
With perfect pleasure) the mild breezes stir

Among the garden roses, red and white,
With whiffs of fragrancy."

She gives us the breath of the pines and of the cool, salt seas, "illimitably sparkling." Her ears drink the ripple of the tide, and she stops

"To gaze as one who is not satisfied
With gazing at the large, bright, breathing sea."

"Phantasies" (after Robert Schumann) is the most complete and perfect poem of this period. Like "Epochs," it is a cycle of poems, and the verse has caught the very trick of music, — alluring, baffling and evasive. This time we have the landscape of the night, the glamour of moon and stars, — pictures half real and half unreal, mystic imaginings, fancies, dreams, and the enchantment of "faërie," and throughout the unanswered cry, the eternal "Wherefore" of destiny. Dawn ends the song with a fine clear note, the return of day, night's misty phantoms rolled away, and the world itself, again green, sparkling and breathing freshness.

In 1874 she published "Alide," a romance in prose drawn from Goethe's autobiography. It may be of interest to quote the letter she received from Tourgéneff on this occasion: —

"Although, generally speaking, I do not think it advisable to take celebrated men, especially poets and artists, as a subject for a novel, still I am truly glad to say that I have read your book with the liveliest interest. It is very sincere and very poetical at the same time; the

life and spirit of Germany have no secrets for you, and your characters are drawn with a pencil as delicate as it is strong. I feel very proud of the approbation you give to my works, and of the influence you kindly attribute to them on your own talent; an author who writes as you do is not a pupil in art any more; he is not far from being himself a master."

Charming and graceful words, of which the young writer was justly proud.

About this time occurred the death of her mother, the first break in the home and family circle. In August of 1876 she made a visit to Concord, at the Emersons', memorable enough for her to keep a journal and note down every incident and detail. Very touching to read now, in its almost childlike simplicity, is this record of "persons that pass and shadows that remain." Mr. Emerson himself meets her at the station, and drives with her in his little one-horse wagon to his home, the gray square house, with dark green blinds, set amidst noble trees. A glimpse of the family, — "the stately, white-haired Mrs. Emerson, and the beautiful, faithful Ellen, whose figure seems always to stand by the side of her august father." Then the picture of Concord itself, lovely and smiling, with its quiet meadows, quiet slopes, and quietest of rivers. She meets the little set of Concord people: Mr. Alcott, for whom she does not share Mr. Emerson's enthusiasm; and William Ellery Channing, whose figure stands out like a gnarled and twisted

scrub-oak,— a pathetic, impossible creature, whose cranks and oddities were submitted to on account of an innate nobility of character. "Generally crabbed and reticent with strangers, he took a liking to me," says Emma Lazarus. "¡The bond of our sympathy was my admiration for Thoreau, whose memory he actually worships, having been his constant companion in his best days, and his daily attendant in the last years of illness and heroic suffering. I do not know whether I was most touched by the thought of the unique, lofty character that had inspired this depth and fervor of friendship, or by the pathetic constancy and pure affection of the poor, desolate old man before me, who tried to conceal his tenderness and sense of irremediable loss by a show of gruffness and philosophy. He never speaks of Thoreau's death," she says, "but always 'Thoreau's loss,' or 'when I lost Mr. Thoreau,' or 'when Mr. Thoreau went away from Concord;' nor would he confess that he missed him, for there was not a day, an hour, a moment, when he did not feel that his friend was still with him and had never left him. And yet a day or two after," she goes on to say, "when I sat with him in the sunlit wood, looking at the gorgeous blue and silver summer sky, he turned to me and said: 'Just half of the world died for me when I lost Mr. Thoreau. None of it looks the same as when I looked at it with him.' . . . He took me through

the woods and pointed out to me every spot visited and described by his friend. Where the hut stood is a little pile of stones, and a sign, 'Site of Thoreau's Hut,' and a few steps beyond is the pond with thickly-wooded shores, — everything exquisitely peaceful and beautiful in the afternoon light, and not a sound to be heard except the crickets or the 'z-ing' of the locusts which Thoreau has described. Farther on he pointed out to me, in the distant landscape, a low roof, the only one visible, which was the roof of Thoreau's birthplace. He had been over there many times, he said, since he lost Mr. Thoreau, but had never gone in, — he was afraid it might look lonely! But he had often sat on a rock in front of the house and looked at it." On parting from his young friend, Mr. Channing gave her a package, which proved to be a copy of his own book on Thoreau, and the pocket compass which Thoreau carried to the Maine woods and on all his excursions. Before leaving the Emersons she received the proof-sheets of her drama of "The Spagnoletto," which was being printed for private circulation. She showed them to Mr. Emerson, who had expressed a wish to see them, and, after reading them, he gave them back to her with the comment that they were "good." She playfully asked him if he would not give her a bigger word to take home to the family. He laughed, and said he did not know of any; but

he went on to tell her that he had taken it up, not expecting to read it through, and had not been able to put it down. Every word and line told of richness in the poetry, he said, and as far as he could judge the play had great dramatic opportunities. Early in the autumn "The Spagnoletto" appeared, — a tragedy in five acts, the scene laid in Italy, 1655.

Without a doubt, every one in these days will take up with misgiving, and like Mr. Emerson "not expecting to read it through," a five-act tragedy of the seventeenth century, so far removed apparently from the age and present actualities, — so opposed to the "Modernité," which has come to be the last word of art. Moreover, great names at once appear; great shades arise to rebuke the presumptuous new-comer in this highest realm of expression. "The Spagnoletto" has grave defects that would probably preclude its ever being represented on the stage. The *dénoûment* especially is unfortunate, and sins against our moral and æsthetic instinct. The wretched, tiger-like father stabs himself in the presence of his crushed and erring daughter, so that she may forever be haunted by the horror and the retribution of his death. We are left suspended, as it were, over an abyss, our moral judgment thwarted, our humanity outraged. But "The Spagnoletto" is, nevertheless, a remarkable production, and pitched in another key from

anything the writer has yet given us. Heretofore we have only had quiet, reflective, passive emotion: now we have a storm and sweep of passion for which we were quite unprepared. Ribera's character is charged like a thunder-cloud with dramatic elements. Maria Rosa is the child of her father, fired at a flash, "deaf, dumb, and blind" at the touch of passion.

"Does love steal gently o'er our soul?"

she asks;

"What if he come,
A cloud, a fire, a whirlwind?"

and then the cry:

"O my God!
This awful joy in mine own heart is love."

Again:

"While you are here the one thing real to me
In all the universe is love."

Exquisitely tender and refined are the love scenes — at the ball and in the garden — between the dashing prince-lover in search of his pleasure and the devoted girl with her heart in her eyes, on her lips, in her hand. Behind them, always like a tragic fate, the sombre figure of the Spagnoletto, and over all the glow and color and soul of Italy.

In 1881 appeared the translation of Heine's poems and ballads, which was generally accepted

as the best version of that untranslatable poet. Very curious is the link between that bitter, mocking, cynic spirit and the refined, gentle spirit of Emma Lazarus. Charmed by the magic of his verse, the iridescent play of his fancy, and the sudden cry of the heart piercing through it all, she is as yet unaware or only vaguely conscious of the real bond between them: the sympathy in the blood, the deep, tragic, Judaic passion of eighteen hundred years that was smouldering in her own heart, soon to break out and change the whole current of her thought and feeling.

Already, in 1879, the storm was gathering. In a distant province of Russia at first, then on the banks of the Volga, and finally in Moscow itself, the old cry was raised, the hideous mediæval charge revived, and the standard of persecution unfurled against the Jews. Province after province took it up. In Bulgaria, Servia, and, above all, Roumania, where, we were told, the sword of the Czar had been drawn to protect the oppressed, Christian atrocities took the place of Moslem atrocities, and history turned a page backward into the dark annals of violence and crime. And not alone in despotic Russia, but in Germany, the seat of modern philosophic thought and culture, the rage of Anti-Semitism broke out and spread with fatal ease and potency. In Berlin itself tumults and riots were threatened. We in America could scarcely com-

prehend the situation or credit the reports, and for a while we shut our eyes and ears to the facts; but we were soon rudely awakened from our insensibility, and forced to face the truth. It was in England that the voice was first raised in behalf of justice and humanity. In January, 1881, there appeared in the "London Times" a series of articles, carefully compiled on the testimony of eye-witnesses, and confirmed by official documents, records, etc., giving an account of events that had been taking place in southern and western Russia during a period of nine months, between April and December of 1880. We do not need to recall the sickening details. The headings will suffice: outrage, murder, arson, and pillage, and the result, — 100,000 Jewish families made homeless and destitute, and nearly $100,000,000 worth of property destroyed. Nor need we recall the generous outburst of sympathy and indignation from America. "It is not that it is the oppression of Jews by Russia," said Mr. Evarts in the meeting at Chickering Hall Wednesday evening, February 4; "it is that it is the oppression of men and women by men and women, and we are men and women." So spoke civilized Christendom, and for Judaism, — who can describe that thrill of brotherhood, quickened anew, the immortal pledge of the race, made one again through sorrow? For Emma Lazarus it was a trumpet call that awoke slumbering and un-

guessed echoes. All this time she had been seeking heroic ideals in alien stock, soulless and far removed; in pagan mythology and mystic, mediæval Christianity, ignoring her very birthright, — the majestic vista of the past, down which, "high above flood and fire," had been conveyed the precious scroll of the Moral Law. Hitherto Judaism had been a dead letter to her. Of Portuguese descent, her family had always been members of the oldest and most orthodox congregation of New York, where strict adherence to custom and ceremonial was the watchword of faith; but it was only during her childhood and earliest years that she attended the synagogue, and conformed to the prescribed rites and usages which she had now long since abandoned as obsolete and having no bearing on modern life. Nor had she any great enthusiasm for her own people. As late as April, 1882, she published in "The Century Magazine" an article written probably some months before, entitled "Was the Earl of Beaconsfield a Representative Jew?" in which she is disposed to accept as the type of the modern Jew the brilliant, successful, but not over-scrupulous *chevalier d'industrie.* In view of subsequent, or rather contemporaneous events, the closing paragraph of the article in question is worthy of being cited: —

"Thus far their religion [the Jewish], whose mere preservation under such adverse conditions seems little short

of a miracle, has been deprived of the natural means of development and progress, and has remained a stationary force. The next hundred years will, in our opinion, be the test of their vitality as a people; the phase of toleration upon which they are only now entering will prove whether or not they are capable of growth."

By a curious, almost fateful juxtaposition, in the same number of the magazine appeared Madame Ragozin's defense of Russian barbarity, and in the following (May) number Emma Lazarus's impassioned appeal and reply, "Russian Christianity *versus* Modern Judaism." From this time dated the crusade that she undertook in behalf of her race, and the consequent expansion of all her faculties, the growth of spiritual power which always ensues when a great cause is espoused and a strong conviction enters the soul. Her verse rang out as it had never rung before, — a clarion note, calling a people to heroic action and unity, to the consciousness and fulfillment of a grand destiny. When has Judaism been so stirred as by "The Crowing of the Red Cock" and

THE BANNER OF THE JEW.

Wake, Israel, wake! Recall to-day
The glorious Maccabean rage,
The sire heroic, hoary-gray,
His five-fold lion-lineage;
The Wise, the Elect, the Help-of-God,
The Burst-of-Spring, the Avenging Rod.

From Mizpeh's mountain ridge they saw
Jerusalem's empty streets; her shrine
Laid waste where Greeks profaned the Law
With idol and with pagan sign.
Mourners in tattered black were there
With ashes sprinkled on their hair.

Then from the stony peak there rang
A blast to ope the graves; down poured
The Maccabean clan, who sang
Their battle anthem to the Lord.
Five heroes lead, and following, see
Ten thousand rush to victory!

Oh for Jerusalem's trumpet now,
To blow a blast of shattering power,
To wake the sleepers high and low,
And rouse them to the urgent hour!
No hand for vengeance, but to save,
A million naked swords should wave.

Oh, deem not dead that martial fire,
Say not the mystic flame is spent!
With Moses' law and David's lyre,
Your ancient strength remains unbent.
Let but an Ezra rise anew,
To lift the *Banner of the Jew!*

A rag, a mock at first, — erelong,
When men have bled and women wept,
To guard its precious folds from wrong,
Even they who shrunk, even they who slept,
Shall leap to bless it and to save.
Strike! for the brave revere the brave!

The dead forms burst their bonds and lived

again. She sings "Rosh Hashanah" (the Jewish New Year) and "Hanuckah" (the Feast of Lights): —

"Kindle the taper like the steadfast star
Ablaze on Evening's forehead o'er the earth,
And add each night a lustre till afar
An eight-fold splendor shine above thy hearth.
Clash, Israel, the cymbals, touch the lyre,
Blow the brass trumpet and the harsh-tongued horn;
Chant psalms of victory till the heart take fire,
The Maccabean spirit leap new-born."

And "The New Ezekiel:" —

"What! can these dead bones live, whose sap is dried
By twenty scorching centuries of wrong?
Is this the House of Israel whose pride
Is as a tale that 's told, an ancient song?
Are these ignoble relics all that live
Of psalmist, priest, and prophet? Can the breath
Of very heaven bid these bones revive,
Open the graves, and clothe the ribs of death?
Yea, Prophesy, the Lord hath said again:
Say to the wind, Come forth and breathe afresh,
Even that they may live, upon these slain,
And bone to bone shall leap, and flesh to flesh.
The spirit is not dead, proclaim the word.
Where lay dead bones a host of armed men stand!
I ope your graves, my people, saith the Lord,
And I shall place you living in your land."

Her whole being renewed and refreshed itself at its very source. She threw herself into the study of her race, its language, literature, and history.

Breaking the outward crust, she pierced to the heart of the faith and "the miracle" of its survival. What was it other than the ever-present, ever-vivifying spirit itself, which cannot die, — the religious and ethical zeal which fires the whole history of the people, and of which she herself felt the living glow within her own soul? She had come upon the secret and the genius of Judaism, — that absolute interpenetration and transfusion of spirit with body and substance which, taken literally, often reduces itself to a question of food and drink, a dietary regulation, and again, in proper splendor, incarnates itself and shines out before humanity in the prophets, teachers, and saviors of mankind.

Those were busy, fruitful years for Emma Lazarus, who worked, not with the pen alone, but in the field of practical and beneficent activity. For there was an immense task to accomplish. The tide of immigration had set in, and ship after ship came laden with hunted human beings flying from their fellow-men, while all the time, like a tocsin, rang the terrible story of cruelty and persecution, — horrors that the pen refuses to dwell upon. By hundreds and thousands they flocked upon our shores, — helpless, innocent victims of injustice and oppression, panic-stricken in the midst of strange and utterly new surroundings.

Emma Lazarus came into personal contact

with these people, and visited them in their refuge on Ward's Island. While under the influence of all the emotions aroused by this great crisis in the history of her race, she wrote the "Dance to Death," a drama of persecution of the twelfth century, founded upon authentic records, — unquestionably her finest work in grasp and scope, and, above all, in moral elevation and purport. The scene is laid in Nordhausen, a free city of Thuringia, where the Jews, living, as they deemed, in absolute security and peace, were caught up in the wave of persecution that swept over Europe at that time. Accused of poisoning the wells and causing the pestilence, or black death, as it was called, they were condemned to be burned.

We do not here intend to enter upon a critical or literary analysis of the play, or to point out dramatic merits or defects, but we should like to make its readers feel with us the holy ardor and impulse of the writer and the spiritual import of the work. The action is without surprise, the doom fixed from the first; but so glowing is the canvas with local and historic color, so vital and intense the movement, so resistless the "internal evidence," if we may call it thus, penetrating its very substance and form, that we are swept along as by a wave of human sympathy and grief. In contrast with "The Spagnoletto," how large is the theme and how all-embracing

the catastrophe! In place of the personal we have the drama of the universal. Love is only a flash now, — a dream caught sight of and at once renounced at a higher claim.

"Have you no smile to welcome love with, Liebhaid?
Why should you tremble?
Prince, I am afraid!
Afraid of my own heart, my unfathomed joy,
A blasphemy against my father's grief,
My people's agony!

"What good shall come, forswearing kith and God,
To follow the allurements of the heart?"

asks the distracted maiden, torn between her love for her princely wooer and her devotion to the people among whom her lot has been cast.

"O God!
How shall I pray for strength to love him less
Than mine own soul!
No more of that,
I am all Israel's now. Till this cloud pass,
I have no thought, no passion, no desire,
Save for my people."

Individuals perish, but great ideas survive, — fortitude and courage, and that exalted loyalty and devotion to principle which alone are worth living and dying for.

The Jews pass by in procession — men, women, and children — on their way to the flames, to the sound of music, and in festal array, carrying the gold and silver vessels, the roll of the law, the

perpetual lamp and the seven-branched silver candle-stick of the synagogue. The crowd hoot and jeer at them.

"The misers! they will take their gems and gold
Down to the grave!"

"Let us rejoice"

sing the Jewish youths in chorus; and the maidens: —

"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Zion!
Within thy portals, O Jerusalem!"

The flames rise and dart among them; their garments wave, their jewels flash, as they dance and sing in the crimson blaze. The music ceases, a sound of crashing boards is heard and a great cry, — "Hallelujah!" What a glory and consecration of martyrdom! Where shall we find a more triumphant vindication and supreme victory of spirit over matter?

"I see, I see,
How Israel's ever-crescent glory makes
These flames that would eclipse it dark as blots
Of candle-light against the blazing sun.
We die a thousand deaths, — drown, bleed, and burn.
Our ashes are dispersed unto the winds.
Yet the wild winds cherish the sacred seed,
The waters guard it in their crystal heart,
The fire refuseth to consume.

. . . . . .

Even as we die in honor, from our death
Shall bloom a myriad heroic lives,

Brave through our bright example, virtuous
Lest our great memory fall in disrepute."

The "Dance to Death" was published, along with other poems and translations from the Hebrew poets of mediæval Spain, in a small volume entitled "Songs of a Semite." The tragedy was dedicated, "In profound veneration and respect to the memory of George Eliot, the illustrious writer who did most among the artists of our day towards elevating and ennobling the spirit of Jewish nationality."

For this was the idea that had caught the imagination of Emma Lazarus, — a restored and independent nationality and repatriation in Palestine. In her article in "The Century" of February, 1883, on the "Jewish Problem," she says: —

"I am fully persuaded that all suggested solutions other than this are but temporary palliatives. . . . The idea formulated by George Eliot has already sunk into the minds of many Jewish enthusiasts, and it germinates with miraculous rapidity. 'The idea that I am possessed with,' says Deronda, 'is that of restoring a political existence to my people; making them a nation again, giving them a national centre, such as the English have, though they, too, are scattered over the face of the globe. That is a task which presents itself to me as a duty. . . . I am resolved to devote my life to it. *At the least, I may awaken a movement in other minds such as has been awakened in my own.*' Could the noble prophetess who wrote the above words have lived but till to-day to see the ever-increasing necessity of adopting her inspired

counsel, . . . she would have been herself astonished at the flame enkindled by her seed of fire, and the practical shape which the movement projected by her in poetic vision is beginning to assume."

In November of 1882 appeared her first "Epistle to the Hebrews," — one of a series of articles written for the "American Hebrew," published weekly through several months. Addressing herself now to a Jewish audience, she sets forth without reserve her views and hopes for Judaism, now passionately urging its claims and its high ideals, and again dispassionately holding up the mirror for the shortcomings and peculiarities of her race. She says: —

"Every student of the Hebrew language is aware that we have in the conjugation of our verbs a mode known as the *intensive voice*, which, by means of an almost imperceptible modification of vowel-points, intensifies the meaning of the primitive root. A similar significance seems to attach to the Jews themselves in connection with the people among whom they dwell. They are the *intensive form* of any nationality whose language and customs they adopt. . . . Influenced by the same causes, they represent the same results; but the deeper lights and shadows of their Oriental temperament throw their failings, as well as their virtues, into more prominent relief."

In drawing the epistles to a close, February 24, 1883, she thus summarizes the special objects she has had in view: —

"My chief aim has been to contribute my mite towards arousing that spirit of Jewish enthusiasm which might

manifest itself: *First*, in a return to the varied pursuits and broad system of physical and intellectual education adopted by our ancestors; *Second*, in a more fraternal and practical movement towards alleviating the sufferings of oppressed Jews in countries less favored than our own; *Third*, in a closer and wider study of Hebrew literature and history; and finally, in a truer recognition of the large principles of religion, liberty, and law upon which Judaism is founded, and which should draw into harmonious unity Jews of every shade of opinion."

Her interest in Jewish affairs was at its height when she planned a visit abroad, which had been a long-cherished dream, and May 15, 1883, she sailed for England, accompanied by a younger sister. We have difficulty in recognizing the tragic priestess we have been portraying in the enthusiastic child of travel who seems new-born into a new world. From the very outset she is in a maze of wonder and delight. At sea she writes: —

"Our last day on board ship was a vision of beauty from morning till night, — the sea like a mirror and the sky dazzling with light. In the afternoon we passed a ship in full sail, near enough to exchange salutes and cheers. After tossing about for six days without seeing a human being, except those on our vessel, even this was a sensation. Then an hour or two before sunset came the great sensation of — land! At first, nothing but a shadow on the far horizon, like the ghost of a ship; two or three widely scattered rocks which were the promontories of Ireland, and sooner than we expected we were steaming along low-lying purple hills.

The journey to Chester gives her "the first

glimpse of mellow England," — a surprise which is yet no surprise, so well known and familiar does it appear. Then Chester, with its quaint, picturesque streets, "like the scene of a Walter Scott novel, the cathedral planted in greenness, and the clear, gray river where a boatful of scarlet dragoons goes gliding by." Everything is a picture for her special benefit. She "drinks in, at every sense, the sights, sounds, and smells, and the unimaginable beauty of it all." Then the bewilderment of London, and a whirl of people, sights, and impressions. She was received with great distinction by the Jews, and many of the leading men among them warmly advocated her views. But it was not alone from her own people that she met with exceptional consideration. She had the privilege of seeing many of the most eminent personages of the day, all of whom honored her with special and personal regard. There was, no doubt, something that strongly attracted and attached people to her at this time, — the force of her intellect at once made itself felt, while at the same time the unaltered simplicity and modesty of her character, and her readiness and freshness of enthusiasm, kept her still almost like a child.

She makes a flying visit to Paris, where she happens to be on the 14th of July, the anniversary of the storming of the Bastile, and of the beginning of the republic; she drives out to

Versailles, "that gorgeous shell of royalty, where the crowd who celebrate the birth of the republic wander freely through the halls and avenues, and into the most sacred rooms of the king. . . . There are ruins on every side in Paris," she says; "ruins of the Commune, or the Siege, or the Revolution; it is terrible — it seems as if the city were seared with fire and blood."

Such was Paris to her then, and she hastens back to her beloved London, starting from there on the tour through England that has been mapped out for her. "A Day in Surrey with William Morris," published in "The Century Magazine," describes her visit to Merton Abbey, the old Norman monastery, converted into a model factory by the poet-humanitarian, who himself received her as his guest, conducted her all over the picturesque building and garden, and explained to her his views of art and his aims for the people.

She drives through Kent, "where the fields, valleys, and slopes are garlanded with hops and ablaze with scarlet poppies." Then Canterbury, Windsor, and Oxford, Stratford, Warwick, the valley of the Wye, Wells, Exeter, and Salisbury, — cathedral after cathedral. Back to London, and then north through York, Durham, and Edinburgh, and on the 15th of September she sails for home. We have merely named the names, for it is impossible to convey an idea of

the delight and importance of this trip, "a crescendo of enjoyment," as she herself calls it. Long after, in strange, dark hours of suffering, these pictures of travel arose before her, vivid and tragic even in their hold and spell upon her.

The winter of 1883–84 was not especially productive. She wrote a few reminiscences of her journey and occasional poems on Jewish themes, which appeared in the "American Hebrew;" but for the most part she gave herself up to quiet retrospect and enjoyment with her friends of the life she had had a glimpse of, and the experience she had stored, — a restful, happy period. In August of the same year she was stricken with a severe and dangerous malady, from which she slowly recovered, only to go through a terrible ordeal and affliction. Her father's health, which had long been failing, now broke down completely, and the whole winter was one long strain of acute anxiety, which culminated in his death, in March, 1885. The blow was a crushing one for Emma. Truly, the silver cord was loosed, and the golden bowl was broken. Life lost its meaning and its charm. Her father's sympathy and pride in her work had been her chief incentive and ambition, and had spurred her on when her own confidence and spirit failed. Never afterwards did she find complete and spontaneous expression. She decided to go abroad again as the best means of regaining composure and strength,

and sailed once more in May for England, where she was welcomed now by the friends she had made, almost as to another home. She spent the summer very quietly at Richmond, an ideally beautiful spot in Yorkshire, where she soon felt the beneficial influence of her peaceful surroundings. "The very air seems to rest one here," she writes; and inspired by the romantic loveliness of the place, she even composed the first few chapters of a novel, begun with a good deal of dash and vigor, but soon abandoned, for she was still struggling with depression and gloom.

"I have neither ability, energy, nor purpose," she writes. "It is impossible to do anything, so I am forced to set it aside for the present; whether to take it up again or not in the future remains to be seen."

In the autumn she goes on the Continent, visiting the Hague, which "completely fascinates" her, and where she feels "stronger and more cheerful" than she has "for many a day." Then Paris, which this time amazes her "with its splendor and magnificence. All the ghosts of the Revolution are somehow laid," she writes, and she spends six weeks here enjoying to the full the gorgeous autumn weather, the sights, the picture galleries, the bookshops, the whole brilliant panorama of the life; and early in December she starts for Italy.

And now once more we come upon that keen

zest of enjoyment, that pure desire and delight of the eyes, which are the prerogative of the poet, — and Emma Lazarus was a poet. The beauty of the world, — what a rapture and intoxication it is, and how it bursts upon her in the very land of beauty, "where Dante and where Petrarch trod!" A magic glow colors it all; no mere blues and greens any more, but a splendor of purple and scarlet and emerald; "each tower, castle, and village shining like a jewel; the olive, the fig, and at your feet the roses, growing in mid-December." A day in Pisa seems like a week, so crowded is it with sensations and unforgettable pictures. Then a month in Florence, which is still more entrancing with its inexhaustible treasures of beauty and art; and finally Rome, the climax of it all, —

"wiping out all other places and impressions, and opening a whole new world of sensations. I am wild with the excitement of this tremendous place. I have been here a week, and have seen the Vatican and the Capitoline Museums, and the Sistine Chapel, and St. Peter's, besides the ruins on the streets and on the hills, and the graves of Shelley and Keats.

"It is all heart-breaking. I don't only mean those beautiful graves overgrown with acanthus and violets, but the mutilated arches and columns and dumb appealing fragments looming up in the glowing sunshine under the Roman blue sky."

True to her old attractions, it is pagan Rome that appeals to her most strongly, —

"and the far-away past, that seems so sad and strange and near. I am even out of humor with pictures; a bit of broken stone or a fragment of a bas-relief, or a Corinthian column standing out against this lapis-lazuli sky, or a tremendous arch, are the only things I can look at for the moment, — except the Sistine Chapel, which is as gigantic as the rest, and forces itself upon you with equal might."

Already, in February, spring is in the air; "the almond-trees are in bloom, violets cover the grass, and oh! the divine, the celestial, the unheard-of beauty of it all!" It is almost a pang to her, "with its strange mixture of longing and regret and delight," and in the midst of it she says, "I have to exert all my strength not to lose myself in morbidness and depression."

Early in March she leaves Rome, consoled with the thought of returning the following winter. In June she was in England again, and spent the summer at Malvern. Disease was no doubt already beginning to prey upon her, for she was oppressed at times by a languor and heaviness amounting almost to lethargy. When she returned to London, however, in September, she felt quite well again, and started for another tour in Holland, which she enjoyed as much as before. She then settled in Paris to await the time when she could leave for Italy. But she was attacked at once with grave and alarming symptoms, that betokened a fatal end to her malady. Entirely ignorant, however, of the

danger that threatened her, she kept up courage and hope, made daily plans for the journey, and looked forward to setting out at any moment. But the weeks passed and the months also; slowly and gradually the hope faded. The journey to Italy must be given up; she was not in condition to be brought home, and she reluctantly resigned herself to remain where she was and "convalesce," as she confidently believed, in the spring. Once again came the analogy, which she herself pointed out now, to Heine on his mattress-grave in Paris. She, too, the last time she went out, dragged herself to the Louvre, to the feet of the Venus, "the goddess without arms, who could not help." Only her indomitable will and intense desire to live seemed to keep her alive. She sunk to a very low ebb, but, as she herself expressed it, she "seemed to have always one little window looking out into life," and in the spring she rallied sufficiently to take a few drives and to sit on the balcony of her apartment. She came back to life with a feverish sort of thirst and avidity. "No such cure for pessimism," she says, "as a severe illness; the simplest pleasures are enough, — to breathe the air and see the sun."

Many plans were made for leaving Paris, but it was finally decided to risk the ocean voyage and bring her home, and accordingly she sailed July 23d, arriving in New York on the last day of that month.

She did not rally after this; and now began her long agony, full of every kind of suffering, mental and physical. Only her intellect seemed kindled anew, and none but those who saw her during the last supreme ordeal can realize that wonderful flash and fire of the spirit before its extinction. Never did she appear so brilliant. Wasted to a shadow, and between acute attacks of pain, she talked about art, poetry, the scenes of travel, of which her brain was so full, and the phases of her own condition, with an eloquence for which even those who knew her best were quite unprepared. Every faculty seemed sharpened and every sense quickened as the "strong deliveress" approached, and the ardent soul was released from the frame that could no longer contain it.

We cannot restrain a feeling of suddenness and incompleteness and a natural pang of wonder and regret for a life so richly and so vitally endowed thus cut off in its prime. But for us it is not fitting to question or repine, but rather to rejoice in the rare possession that we hold. What is any life, even the most rounded and complete, but a fragment and a hint? What Emma Lazarus might have accomplished, had she been spared, it is idle and even ungrateful to speculate. What she did accomplish has real and peculiar significance. It is the privilege of a favored few that every fact and circumstance of

their individuality shall add lustre and value to what they achieve. To be born a Jewess was a distinction for Emma Lazarus, and she in turn conferred distinction upon her race. To be born a woman also lends a grace and a subtle magnetism to her influence. Nowhere is there contradiction or incongruity. Her works bear the imprint of her character, and her character of her works; the same directness and honesty, the same limpid purity of tone, and the same atmosphere of things refined and beautiful. The vulgar, the false, and the ignoble, — she scarcely comprehended them, while on every side she was open and ready to take in and respond to whatever can adorn and enrich life. Literature was no mere "profession" for her, which shut out other possibilities; it was only a free, wide horizon and background for culture. She was passionately devoted to music, which inspired some of her best poems; and during the last years of her life, in hours of intense physical suffering, she found relief and consolation in listening to the strains of Bach and Beethoven. When she went abroad, painting was revealed to her, and she threw herself with the same ardor and enthusiasm into the study of the great masters; her last work (left unfinished) was a critical analysis of the genius and personality of Rembrandt.

And now, at the end, we ask, Has the grave

really closed over all these gifts? Has that eager, passionate striving ceased, that hunger and thirst which we call life, and "is the rest silence?"

Who knows? But would we break, if we could, that repose, that silence and mystery and peace everlasting?

EPOCHS.

"The epochs of our life are not in the visible facts, but in the silent thought by the wayside as we walk." — EMERSON.

I. YOUTH.

SWEET empty sky of June without a stain,
  Faint, gray-blue dewy mists on far-off hills,
Warm, yellow sunlight flooding mead and plain,
  That each dark copse and hollow overfills;
  The rippling laugh of unseen, rain-fed rills,
Weeds delicate-flowered, white and pink and gold,
A murmur and a singing manifold.

The gray, austere old earth renews her youth
  With dew-lines, sunshine, gossamer, and haze.
How still she lies and dreams, and veils the truth,
  While all is fresh as in the early days!
  What simple things be these the soul to raise
To bounding joy, and make young pulses beat,
With nameless pleasure finding life so sweet.

On such a golden morning forth there floats,
  Between the soft earth and the softer sky,
In the warm air adust with glistening motes,
  The mystic winged and flickering butterfly,
  A human soul, that hovers giddily

Among the gardens of earth's paradise,
Nor dreams of fairer fields or loftier skies.

II. REGRET.

Thin summer rain on grass and bush and hedge,
  Reddening the road and deepening the green
On wide, blurred lawn, and in close-tangled sedge;
  Veiling in gray the landscape stretched between
  These low broad meadows and the pale hills seen
But dimly on the far horizon's edge.

In these transparent-clouded, gentle skies,
  Wherethrough the moist beams of the soft June sun
Might any moment break, no sorrow lies,
  No note of grief in swollen brooks that run,
  No hint of woe in this subdued, calm tone
Of all the prospect unto dreamy eyes.

Only a tender, unnamed half-regret
  For the lost beauty of the gracious morn;
A yearning aspiration, fainter yet,
  For brighter suns in joyous days unborn,
  Now while brief showers ruffle grass and corn,
And all the earth lies shadowed, grave, and wet;

Space for the happy soul to pause again
  From pure content of all unbroken bliss,

To dream the future void of grief and pain,
And muse upon the past, in reveries
More sweet for knowledge that the present is
Not all complete, with mist and clouds and rain.

III. LONGING.

Look westward o'er the steaming rain-washed slopes,
Now satisfied with sunshine, and behold
Those lustrous clouds, as glorious as our hopes,
Softened with feathery fleece of downy gold,
In all fantastic, huddled shapes uprolled,
Floating like dreams, and melting silently,
In the blue upper regions of pure sky.

The eye is filled with beauty, and the heart
Rejoiced with sense of life and peace renewed;
And yet at such an hour as this, upstart
Vague myriad longings, restless, unsubdued,
And causeless tears from melancholy mood,
Strange discontent with earth's and nature's best,
Desires and yearnings that may find no rest.

IV. STORM.

Serene was morning with clear, winnowed air,
But threatening soon the low, blue mass of cloud
Rose in the west, with mutterings faint and rare
At first, but waxing frequent and more loud.
Thick sultry mists the distant hill-tops shroud;

The sunshine dies; athwart black skies of lead
Flash noiselessly thin threads of lightning red.

Breathless the earth seems waiting some wild blow,
Dreaded, but far too close to ward or shun.
Scared birds aloft fly aimless, and below
Naught stirs in fields whence light and life are gone,
Save floating leaves, with wisps of straw and down,
Upon the heavy air; 'neath blue-black skies,
Livid and yellow the green landscape lies.

And all the while the dreadful thunder breaks,
Within the hollow circle of the hills,
With gathering might, that angry echoes wakes,
And earth and heaven with unused clamor fills.
O'erhead still flame those strange electric thrills.
A moment more, — behold! yon bolt struck home,
And over ruined fields the storm hath come!

V. SURPRISE.

When the stunned soul can first lift tired eyes
On her changed world of ruin, waste, and wrack,

Ah, what a pang of aching sharp surprise
Brings all sweet memories of the lost past back,
With wild self-pitying grief of one betrayed,
Duped in a land of dreams where Truth is dead!

Are these the heavens that she deemed were kind?
Is this the world that yesterday was fair?
What painted images of folk half-blind
Be these who pass her by, as vague as air?
What go they seeking? there is naught to find.
Let them come nigh and hearken her despair.

A mocking lie is all she once believed,
And where her heart throbbed, is a cold dead stone.
This is a doom she never preconceived,
Yet now she cannot fancy it undone.
Part of herself, part of the whole hard scheme,
All else is but the shadow of a dream.

VI. GRIEF.

There is a hungry longing in the soul,
A craving sense of emptiness and pain,
She may not satisfy nor yet control,
For all the teeming world looks void and vain.
No compensation in eternal spheres,
She knows the loneliness of all her years.

There is no comfort looking forth nor back,
The present gives the lie to all her past.
Will cruel time restore what she doth lack?
Why was no shadow of this doom forecast?
Ah! she hath played with many a keen-edged thing;
Naught is too small and soft to turn and sting.

In the unnatural glory of the hour,
Exalted over time, and death, and fate,
No earthly task appears beyond her power,
No possible endurance seemeth great.
She knows her misery and her majesty,
And recks not if she be to live or die.

VII. ACCEPTANCE.

Yea, she hath looked Truth grimly face to face,
And drained unto the lees the proffered cup.
This silence is not patience, nor the grace
Of resignation, meekly offered up,
But mere acceptance fraught with keenest pain,
Seeing that all her struggles must be vain.

Her future clear and terrible outlies,—
This burden to be borne through all her days,
This crown of thorns pressed down above her eyes,
This weight of trouble she may never raise.
No reconcilement doth she ask nor wait;
Knowing such things are, she endures her fate.

No brave endeavor of the broken will
To cling to such poor strays as will abide
(Although the waves be wild and angry still)
After the lapsing of the swollen tide.
No fear of further loss, no hope of gain,
Naught but the apathy of weary pain.

VIII. LONELINESS.

All stupor of surprise hath passed away;
She sees, with clearer vision than before,
A world far off of light and laughter gay,
Herself alone and lonely evermore.
Folk come and go, and reach her in no wise,
Mere flitting phantoms to her heavy eyes.

All outward things, that once seemed part of her,
Fall from her, like the leaves in autumn shed.
She feels as one embalmed in spice and myrrh,
With the heart eaten out, a long time dead;
Unchanged without, the features and the form;
Within, devoured by the thin red worm.

By her own prowess she must stand or fall,
This grief is to be conquered day by day.
Who could befriend her? who could make this small,
Or her strength great? she meets it as she may.
A weary struggle and a constant pain,
She dreams not they may ever cease nor wane.

IX. SYMPATHY.

It comes not in such wise as she had deemed,
Else might she still have clung to her despair.
More tender, grateful than she could have dreamed,
Fond hands passed pitying over brows and hair,
And gentle words borne softly through the air,
Calming her weary sense and wildered mind,
By welcome, dear communion with her kind.

Ah! she forswore all words as empty lies;
What speech could help, encourage, or repair?
Yet when she meets these grave, indulgent eyes,
Fulfilled with pity, simplest words are fair,
Caressing, meaningless, that do not dare
To compensate or mend, but merely soothe
With hopeful visions after bitter Truth.

One who through conquered trouble had grown wise,
To read the grief unspoken, unexpressed,
The misery of the blank and heavy eyes, —
Or through youth's infinite compassion guessed
The heavy burden, — such a one brought rest,
And bade her lay aside her doubts and fears,
While the hard pain dissolved in blessed tears.

X. PATIENCE.

The passion of despair is quelled at last;
The cruel sense of undeservéd wrong,
The wild self-pity, these are also past;
She knows not what may come, but she is strong;
She feels she hath not aught to lose nor gain,
Her patience is the essence of all pain.

As one who sits beside a lapsing stream,
She sees the flow of changeless day by day,
Too sick and tired to think, too sad to dream,
Nor cares how soon the waters slip away,
Nor where they lead; at the wise God's decree,
She will depart or bide indifferently.

There is a deeper pathos in the mild
And settled sorrow of the quiet eyes,
Than in the tumults of the anguish wild,
That made her curse all things beneath the skies;
No question, no reproaches, no complaint,
Hers is the holy calm of some meek saint.

XI. HOPE.

Her languid pulses thrill with sudden hope,
That will not be forgot nor cast aside,
And life in statelier vistas seems to ope,
Illimitably lofty, long, and wide.

What doth she know? She is subdued and mild,
Quiet and docile "as a weanéd child."

If grief came in such unimagined wise,
How may joy dawn? In what undreamed-of hour,
May the light break with splendor of surprise,
Disclosing all the mercy and the power?
A baseless hope, yet vivid, keen, and bright,
As the wild lightning in the starless night.

She knows not whence it came, nor where it passed,
But it revealed, in one brief flash of flame,
A heaven so high, a world so rich and vast,
That, full of meek contrition and mute shame,
In patient silence hopefully withdrawn,
She bows her head, and bides the certain dawn.

XII. COMPENSATION.

'T is not alone that black and yawning void
That makes her heart ache with this hungry pain,
But the glad sense of life hath been destroyed,
The lost delight may never come again.
Yet myriad serious blessings with grave grace
Arise on every side to fill their place.

For much abides in her so lonely life, —
The dear companionship of her own kind,

Love where least looked for, quiet after strife,
Whispers of promise upon every wind,
And quickened insight, in awakened eyes,
For the new meaning of the earth and skies.

The nameless charm about all things hath died,
Subtle as aureole round a shadow's head,
Cast on the dewy grass at morning-tide;
Yet though the glory and the joy be fled,
'T is much her own endurance to have weighed,
And wrestled with God's angels, unafraid.

XIII. FAITH.

She feels outwearied, as though o'er her head
A storm of mighty billows broke and passed.
Whose hand upheld her? Who her footsteps led
To this green haven of sweet rest at last?
What strength was hers, unreckoned and unknown?
What love sustained when she was most alone?

Unutterably pathetic her desire,
To reach, with groping arms outstretched in prayer,
Something to cling to, to uplift her higher
From this low world of coward fear and care,
Above disaster, that her will may be
At one with God's, accepting his decree.

Though by no reasons she be justified,
Yet strangely brave in Evil's very face,

She deems this want must needs be satisfied,
Though here all slips from out her weak embrace.
And in blind ecstasy of perfect faith,
With her own dream her prayer she answereth.

XIV. WORK.

Yet life is not a vision nor a prayer,
But stubborn work; she may not shun her task.
After the first compassion, none will spare
Her portion and her work achieved, to ask.
She pleads for respite, — she will come ere long
When, resting by the roadside, she is strong.

Nay, for the hurrying throng of passers-by
Will crush her with their onward-rolling stream.
Much must be done before the brief light die;
She may not loiter, rapt in this vain dream.
With unused trembling hands, and faltering feet,
She staggers forth, her lot assigned to meet.

But when she fills her days with duties done,
Strange vigor comes, she is restored to health.
New aims, new interests rise with each new sun,
And life still holds for her unbounded wealth.
All that seemed hard and toilsome now proves small,
And naught may daunt her, — she hath strength for all.

XV. VICTORY.

How strange, in some brief interval of rest,
Backward to look on her far-stretching past.
To see how much is conquered and repressed,
How much is gained in victory at last!
The shadow is not lifted, — but her faith,
Strong from life's miracles, now turns toward death.

Though much be dark where once rare splendor shone,
Yet the new light has touched high peaks unguessed
In her gold, mist-bathed dawn, and one by one
New outlooks loom from many a mountain crest.
She breathes a loftier, purer atmosphere,
And life's entangled paths grow straight and clear.

Nor will Death prove an all-unwelcome guest;
The struggle has been toilsome to this end,
Sleep will be sweet, and after labor rest,
And all will be atoned with him to friend.
Much must be reconciled, much justified,
And yet she feels she will be satisfied.

XVI. PEACE.

The calm outgoing of a long, rich day,
  Checkered with storm and sunshine, gloom and
    light,
Now passing in pure, cloudless skies away,
  Withdrawing into silence of blank night.
  Thick shadows settle on the landscape bright,
Like the weird cloud of death that falls apace
On the still features of the passive face.

Soothing and gentle as a mother's kiss,
  The touch that stopped the beating of the
    heart.
A look so blissfully serene as this,
  Not all the joy of living could impart.
  Patient to bide, yet willing to depart,
With dauntless faith and courage therewithal,
The Master found her ready at his call.

On such a golden evening forth there floats,
  Between the grave earth and the glowing sky
In the clear air, unvexed with hazy motes,
  The mystic-winged and flickering butterfly,
  A human soul, that drifts at liberty,
Ah! who can tell to what strange paradise,
To what undreamed-of fields and lofty skies!

HOW LONG?

How long, and yet how long,
Our leaders will we hail from over seas,
Masters and kings from feudal monarchies,
And mock their ancient song
With echoes weak of foreign melodies?

That distant isle mist-wreathed,
Mantled in unimaginable green,
Too long hath been our mistress and our queen.
Our fathers have bequeathed
Too deep a love for her, our hearts within.

She made the whole world ring
With the brave exploits of her children strong,
And with the matchless music of her song.
Too late, too late we cling
To alien legends, and their strains prolong.

This fresh young world I see,
With heroes, cities, legends of her own;
With a new race of men, and overblown
By winds from sea to sea,
Decked with the majesty of every zone.

I see the glittering tops
Of snow-peaked mounts, the wid'ning vale's expanse,
Large prairies where free herds of horses prance,

Exhaustless wealth of crops,
In vast, magnificent extravagance.

These grand, exuberant plains,
These stately rivers, each with many a mouth,
The exquisite beauty of the soft-aired south,
The boundless seas of grains,
Luxuriant forests' lush and splendid growth.

The distant siren-song
Of the green island in the eastern sea,
Is not the lay for this new chivalry.
It is not free and strong
To chant on prairies 'neath this brilliant sky.

The echo faints and fails;
It suiteth not, upon this western plain,
Our voice or spirit; we should stir again
The wilderness, and make the vales
Resound unto a yet unheard-of strain.

HEROES.

In rich Virginian woods,
The scarlet creeper reddens over graves,
Among the solemn trees enlooped with vines;
Heroic spirits haunt the solitudes, —
The noble souls of half a million braves,
Amid the murmurous pines.

Ah! who is left behind,
Earnest and eloquent, sincere and strong,
To consecrate their memories with words
Not all unmeet? with fitting dirge and song
To chant a requiem purer than the wind,
And sweeter than the birds?

Here, though all seems at peace,
The placid, measureless sky serenely fair,
The laughter of the breeze among the leaves,
The bars of sunlight slanting through the trees,
The reckless wild-flowers blooming everywhere,
The grasses' delicate sheaves, —

Nathless each breeze that blows,
Each tree that trembles to its leafy head
With nervous life, revives within our mind,
Tender as flowers of May, the thoughts of those
Who lie beneath the living beauty, dead, —
Beneath the sunshine, blind.

For brave dead soldiers, these:
Blessings and tears of aching thankfulness,
Soft flowers for the graves in wreaths enwove,
The odorous lilac of dear memories,
The heroic blossoms of the wilderness,
And the rich rose of love.

But who has sung their praise,
Not less illustrious, who are living yet?

Armies of heroes, satisfied to pass
Calmly, serenely from the whole world's gaze,
And cheerfully accept, without regret,
  Their old life as it was,

  With all its petty pain,
Its irritating littleness and care;
They who have scaled the mountain, with content
Sublime, descend to live upon the plain;
Steadfast as though they breathed the mountain-air
  Still, wheresoe'er they went.

  They who were brave to act,
And rich enough their action to forget;
Who, having filled their day with chivalry,
Withdraw and keep their simpleness intact,
And all unconscious add more lustre yet
  Unto their victory.

  On the broad Western plains
Their patriarchal life they live anew;
Hunters as mighty as the men of old,
Or harvesting the plenteous, yellow grains,
Gathering ripe vintage of dusk bunches blue,
  Or working mines of gold;

  Or toiling in the town,
Armed against hindrance, weariness, defeat,

With dauntless purpose not to swerve or yield,
And calm, defiant strength, they struggle on,
As sturdy and as valiant in the street,
As in the camp and field.

And those condemned to live,
Maimed, helpless, lingering still through suffering years,
May they not envy now the restful sleep
Of the dear fellow-martyrs they survive?
Not o'er the dead, but over these, your tears,
O brothers, ye may weep!

New England fields I see,
The lovely, cultured landscape, waving grain,
Wide, haughty rivers, and pale, English skies.
And lo! a farmer ploughing busily,
Who lifts a swart face, looks upon the plain, —
I see, in his frank eyes,

The hero's soul appear.
Thus in the common fields and streets they stand;
The light that on the past and distant gleams,
They cast upon the present and the near,
With antique virtues from some mystic land,
Of knightly deeds and dreams.

ADMETUS.

TO MY FRIEND, RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

He who could beard the lion in his lair,
To bind him for a girl, and tame the boar,
And drive these beasts before his chariot,
Might wed Alcestis. For her low brows' sake,
Her hairs' soft undulations of warm gold,
Her eyes' clear color and pure virgin mouth,
Though many would draw bow or shiver spear,
Yet none dared meet the intolerable eye,
Or lipless tusk, of lion or of boar.
This heard Admetus, King of Thessaly,
Whose broad, fat pastures spread their ample fields
Down to the sheer edge of Amphrysus' stream,
Who laughed, disdainful, at the father's pride,
That set such value on one milk-faced child.

One morning, as he rode alone and passed
Through the green twilight of Thessalian woods,
Between two pendulous branches interlocked,
As through an open casement, he descried
A goddess, as he deemed, — in truth a maid.
On a low bank she fondled tenderly
A favorite hound, her floral face inclined
Above the glossy, graceful animal,
That pressed his snout against her cheek and gazed
Wistfully, with his keen, sagacious eyes.

One arm with lax embrace the neck enwreathed,
With polished roundness near the sleek, gray skin.
Admetus, fixed with wonder, dared not pass,
Intrusive on her holy innocence
And sacred girlhood, but his fretful steed
Snuffed the large air, and champed and pawed the ground;
And hearing this, the maiden raised her head.
No let or hindrance then might stop the king,
Once having looked upon those supreme eyes.
The drooping boughs disparting, forth he sped,
And then drew in his steed, to ask the path,
Like a lost traveller in an alien land.
Although each river-cloven vale, with streams
Arrowy glancing to the blue Ægean,
Each hallowed mountain, the abode of gods,
Pelion and Ossa fringed with haunted groves,
The height, spring-crowned, of dedicate Olympus,
And pleasant sun-fed vineyards, were to him
Familiar as his own face in the stream,
Nathless he paused and asked the maid what path
Might lead him from the forest. She replied,
But still he tarried, and with sportsman's praise
Admired the hound and stooped to stroke its head,
And asked her if she hunted. Nay, not she:
Her father Pelias hunted in these woods,
Where there was royal game. He knew her now, —

Alcestis, — and he left her with due thanks:
No goddess, but a mortal, to be won
By such a simple feat as driving boars
And lions to his chariot. What was that
To him who saw the boar of Calydon,
The sacred boar of Artemis, at bay
In the broad stagnant marsh, and sent his darts
In its tough, quivering flank, and saw its death,
Stung by sure arrows of Arcadian nymph?

To river-pastures of his flocks and herds
Admetus rode, where sweet-breathed cattle grazed,
Heifers and goats and kids, and foolish sheep
Dotted cool, spacious meadows with bent heads,
And necks' soft wool broken in yellow flakes,
Nibbling sharp-toothed the rich, thick-growing blades.
One herdsman kept the innumerable droves —
A boy yet, young as immortality —
In listless posture on a vine-grown rock.
Around him huddled kids and sheep that left
The mother's udder for his nighest grass,
Which sprouted with fresh verdure where he sat.
And yet dull neighboring rustics never guessed
A god had been among them till he went,
Although with him they acted as he willed,
Renouncing shepherds' silly pranks and quips,
Because his very presence made them grave.
Amphryssius, after their translucent stream,

They called him, but Admetus knew his name, —
Hyperion, god of sun and song and silver speech,
Condemned to serve a mortal for his sin
To Zeus in sending violent darts of death,
And raising hand irreverent, against
The one-eyed forgers of the thunderbolt.
For shepherd's crook he held the living rod
Of twisted serpents, later Hermes' wand.
Him sought the king, discovering soon hard by,
Idle, as one in nowise bound to time,
Watching the restless grasses blow and wave,
The sparkle of the sun upon the stream,
Regretting nothing, living with the hour :
For him, who had his light and song within,
Was naught that did not shine, and all things sang.
Admetus prayed for his celestial aid
To win Alcestis, which the god vouchsafed,
Granting with smiles, as grant all gods, who smite
With stern hand, sparing not for piteousness,
But give their gifts in gladness.

Thus the king
Led with loose rein the beasts as tame as kine,
And townsfolk thronged within the city streets,
As round a god; and mothers showed their babes,
And maidens loved the crowned intrepid youth,
And men would worship, though the very god

Who wrought the wonder dwelled unnoted nigh,
Divinely scornful of neglect or praise.
Then Pelias, seeing this would be his son,
As he had vowed, called for his wife and child.
With Anaxibia, Alcestis came,
A warm flush spreading o'er her eager face
In looking on the rider of the woods,
And knowing him her suitor and the king.

Admetus won Alcestis thus to wife,
And these with mated hearts and mutual love
Lived a life blameless, beautiful: the king
Ordaining justice in the gates; the queen,
With grateful offerings to the household gods,
Wise with the wisdom of the pure in heart.
One child she bore, — Eumelus, — and he throve.
Yet none the less because they sacrificed
The firstlings of their flocks and fruits and flowers,
Did trouble come; for sickness seized the king.
Alcestis watched with many-handed love,
But unavailing service, for he lay
With languid limbs, despite his ancient strength
Of sinew, and his skill with spear and sword.
His mother came, Clymene, and with her
His father, Pheres: his unconscious child
They brought him, while forlorn Alcestis sat
Discouraged, with the face of desolation.
The jealous gods would bind his mouth from speech,
And smite his vigorous frame with impotence;

And ruin with bitter ashes, worms, and dust,
The beauty of his crowned, exalted head.
He knew her presence, — soon he would not know,
Nor feel her hand in his lie warm and close,
Nor care if she were near him any more.
Exhausted with long vigils, thus the queen
Held hard and grievous thoughts, till heavy sleep
Possessed her weary senses, and she dreamed.
And even in her dream her trouble lived,
For she was praying in a barren field
To all the gods for help, when came across
The waste of air and land, from distant skies,
A spiritual voice divinely clear,
Whose unimaginable sweetness thrilled
Her aching heart with tremor of strange joy:
"Arise, Alcestis, cast away white fear.
A god dwells with you: seek, and you shall find."
Then quiet satisfaction filled her soul
Almost akin to gladness, and she woke.
Weak as the dead, Admetus lay there still;
But she, superb with confidence, arose,
And passed beyond the mourners' curious eyes,
Seeking Amphryssius in the meadow-lands.
She found him with the godlike mien of one
Who, roused, awakens unto deeds divine:
"I come, Hyperion, with incessant tears,
To crave the life of my dear lord the king.
Pity me, for I see the future years

Widowed and laden with disastrous days.
And ye, the gods, will miss him when the fires
Upon your shrines, unfed, neglected die.
Who will pour large libations in your names,
And sacrifice with generous piety?
Silence and apathy will greet you there
Where once a splendid spirit offered praise.
Grant me this boon divine, and I will beat
With prayer at morning's gates, before they ope
Unto thy silver-hoofed and flame-eyed steeds.
Answer ere yet the irremeable stream
Be crossed: answer, O god, and save!"
She ceased,
With full throat salt with tears, and looked on him,
And with a sudden cry of awe fell prone,
For, lo! he was transmuted to a god;
The supreme aureole radiant round his brow,
Divine refulgence on his face, — his eyes
Awful with splendor, and his august head
With blinding brilliance crowned by vivid flame.
Then in a voice that charmed the listening air:
"Woman, arise! I have no influence
On Death, who is the servant of the Fates.
Howbeit for thy passion and thy prayer,
The grace of thy fair womanhood and youth,
Thus godlike will I intercede for thee,
And sue the insatiate sisters for this life.
Yet hope not blindly: loth are these to change
Their purpose; neither will they freely give,

But haggling lend or sell: perchance the price
Will countervail the boon. Consider this.
Now rise and look upon me." And she rose,
But by her stood no godhead bathed in light,
But young Amphryssius, herdsman to the king,
Benignly smiling.
Fleet as thought, the god
Fled from the glittering earth to blackest depths
Of Tartarus; and none might say he sped
On wings ambrosial, or with feet as swift
As scouring hail, or airy chariot
Borne by flame-breathing steeds ethereal;
But with a motion inconceivable
Departed and was there. Before the throne
Of Ades, first he hailed the long-sought queen,
Stolen with violent hands from grassy fields
And delicate airs of sunlit Sicily,
Pensive, gold-haired, but innocent-eyed no more
As when she laughing plucked the daffodils,
But grave as one fulfilling a strange doom.
And low at Ades' feet, wrapped in grim murk
And darkness thick, the three gray women sat,
Loose-robed and chapleted with wool and flowers,
Purple narcissi round their horrid hair.
Intent upon her task, the first one held
The slender thread that at a touch would snap;
The second weaving it with warp and woof
Into strange textures, some stained dark and foul,
Some sanguine-colored, and some black as night,

And rare ones white, or with a golden thread
Running throughout the web: the farthest hag
With glistening scissors cut her sisters' work.
To these Hyperion, but they never ceased,
Nor raised their eyes, till with soft, moderate tones,
But by their powerful persuasiveness
Commanding all to listen and obey,
He spoke, and all hell heard, and these three looked
And waited his request:
"I come, a god,
At a pure mortal queen's request, who sues
For life renewed unto her dying lord,
Admetus; and I also pray this prayer."
"Then cease, for when hath Fate been moved by prayer?"
"But strength and upright heart should serve with you."
"Nay, these may serve with all but Destiny."
"I ask ye not forever to forbear,
But spare a while, — a moment unto us,
A lifetime unto men." "The Fates swerve not
For supplications, like the pliant gods.
Have they not willed a life's thread should be cut?
With them the will is changeless as the deed.
O men! ye have not learned in all the past,
Desires are barren and tears yield no fruit.

How long will ye besiege the thrones of gods
With lamentations? When lagged Death for all
Your timorous shirking? We work not like you,
Delaying and relenting, purposeless,
With unenduring issues; but our deeds,
Forever interchained and interlocked,
Complete each other and explain themselves."
"Ye will a life: then why not any life?"
"What care we for the king? He is not worth
These many words; indeed, we love not speech.
We care not if he live, or lose such life
As men are greedy for, — filled full with hate,
Sins beneath scorn, and only lit by dreams,
Or one sane moment, or a useless hope, —
Lasting how long? — the space between the green
And fading yellow of the grass they tread."
But he withdrawing not: "Will any life
Suffice ye for Admetus?" "Yea," the crones
Three times repeated. "We know no such names
As king or queen or slave: we want but life.
Begone, and vex us in our work no more."

With broken blessings, inarticulate joy
And tears, Alcestis thanked Hyperion,
And worshipped. Then he gently: "Who will die,

So that the king may live?" And she: "You ask?
Nay, who will live when life clasps hands with shame,
And death with honor? Lo, you are a god;
You cannot know the highest joy of life, —
To leave it when 't is worthier to die.
His parents, kinsmen, courtiers, subjects, slaves, —
For love of him myself would die, were none
Found ready; but what Greek would stand to see
A woman glorified, and falter? Once,
And only once, the gods will do this thing
In all the ages: such a man themselves
Delight to honor, — holy, temperate, chaste,
With reverence for his dæmon and his god."
Thus she triumphant to the very door
Of King Admetus' chamber. All there saw
Her ill-timed gladness with much wonderment.
But she: "No longer mourn! The king is saved:
The Fates will spare him. Lift your voice in praise;
Sing pæans to Apollo; crown your brows
With laurel; offer thankful sacrifice!"
"O Queen, what mean these foolish words misplaced?
And what an hour is this to thank the Fates?"
"Thrice blessed be the gods! — for God himself
Has sued for me, — they are not stern and deaf.

Cry, and they answer: commune with your soul,
And they send counsel: weep with rainy grief,
And these will sweeten you your bitterest tears.
On one condition King Admetus lives,
And ye, on hearing, will lament no more,
Each emulous to save." Then — for she spake
Assured, as having heard an oracle —
They asked: "What deed of ours may serve the king?"
"The Fates accept another life for his,
And one of you may die." Smiling, she ceased.
But silence answered her. "What! do ye thrust
Your arrows in your hearts beneath your cloaks,
Dying like Greeks, too proud to own the pang?
This ask I not. In all the populous land
But one need suffer for immortal praise.
The generous Fates have sent no pestilence,
Famine, nor war: it is as though they gave
Freely, and only make the boon more rich
By such slight payment. Now a people mourns,
And ye may change the grief to jubilee,
Filling the cities with a pleasant sound.
But as for me, what faltering words can tell
My joy, in extreme sharpness kin to pain?
A monument you have within my heart,
Wreathed with kind love and dear remembrances;
And I will pray for you before I crave
Pardon and pity for myself from God.

Your name will be the highest in the land,
Oftenest, fondest on my grateful lips,
After the name of him you die to save.
What! silent still? Since when has virtue grown
Less beautiful than indolence and ease?
Is death more terrible, more hateworthy,
More bitter than dishonor? Will ye live
On shame? Chew and find sweet its poisoned fruits?
What sons will ye bring forth — mean-souled like you,
Or, like your parents, brave — to blush like girls,
And say, 'Our fathers were afraid to die!'
Ye will not dare to raise heroic eyes
Unto the eyes of aliens. In the streets
Will women and young children point at you
Scornfully, and the sun will find you shamed,
And night refuse to shield you. What a life
Is this ye spin and fashion for yourselves!
And what new tortures of suspense and doubt
Will death invent for such as are afraid!
Acastus, thou my brother, in the field
Foremost, who greeted me with sanguine hands
From ruddy battle with a conqueror's face, —
These honors wilt thou blot with infamy?
Nay, thou hast won no honors: a mere girl
Would do as much as thou at such a time,
In clamorous battle, 'midst tumultuous sounds,

Neighing of war-steeds, shouts of sharp command,
Snapping of shivered spears; for all are brave
When all men look to them expectantly;
But he is truly brave who faces death
Within his chamber, at a sudden call,
At night, when no man sees, — content to die
When life can serve no longer those he loves."
Then thus Acastus: "Sister, I fear not
Death, nor the empty darkness of the grave,
And hold my life but as a little thing,
Subject unto my people's call, and Fate.
But if 't is little, no greater is the king's;
And though my heart bleeds sorely, I recall
Astydamia, who thus would mourn for me.
We are not cowards, we youth of Thessaly,
And Thessaly — yea, all Greece — knoweth it;
Nor will we brook the name from even you,
Albeit a queen, and uttering these wild words
Through your unwonted sorrow." Then she knew
That he stood firm, and turning from him, cried
To the king's parents: "Are ye deaf with grief,
Pheres, Clymene? Ye can save your son,
Yet rather stand and weep with barren tears.
O, shame! to think that such gray, reverend hairs
Should cover such unvenerable heads!
What would ye lose? — a remnant of mere life,
A few slight raveled threads, and give him years

To fill with glory. Who, when he is gone,
Will call you gentlest names this side of heaven, —
Father and mother? Knew ye not this man
Ere he was royal, — a poor, helpless child,
Crownless and kingdomless? One birth alone
Sufficeth not, Clymene: once again
You must give life with travail and strong pain.
Has he not lived to outstrip your swift hopes?
What mother can refuse a second birth
To such a son? But ye denying him,
What after-offering may appease the gods?
What joy outweigh the grief of this one day?
What clamor drown the hours' myriad tongues,
Crying, 'Your son, your son? where is your son,
Unnatural mother, timid, foolish man?"
Then Pheres gravely: "These are graceless words
From you our daughter. Life is always life,
And death comes soon enough to such as we.
We twain are old and weak, have served our time,
And made our sacrifices. Let the young
Arise now in their turn and save the king."
"O gods! look on your creatures! do ye see?
And seeing, have ye patience? Smite them all,
Unsparing, with dishonorable death.
Vile slaves! a woman teaches you to die.
Intrepid, with exalted steadfast soul,
Scorn in my heart, and love unutterable,

I yield the Fates my life, and like a god
Command them to revere that sacred head.
Thus kiss I thrice the dear, blind, holy eyes,
And bid them see; and thrice I kiss this brow,
And thus unfasten I the pale, proud lips
With fruitful kissings, bringing love and life,
And without fear or any pang, I breathe
My soul in him."

"Alcestis, I awake.
I hear, I hear — unspeak thy reckless words!
For, lo! thy life-blood tingles in my veins,
And streameth through my body like new wine.
Behold! thy spirit dedicate revives
My pulse, and through thy sacrifice I breathe.
Thy lips are bloodless: kiss me not again.
Ashen thy cheeks, faded thy flower-like hands.
O woman! perfect in thy womanhood
And in thy wifehood, I adjure thee now
As mother, by the love thou bearest our child,
In this thy hour of passion and of love,
Of sacrifice and sorrow, to unsay
Thy words sublime!" "I die that thou mayest live."
"And deemest thou that I accept the boon,
Craven, like these my subjects? Lo, my queen,
Is life itself a lovely thing, — bare life?
And empty breath a thing desirable?
Or is it rather happiness and love
That make it precious to its inmost core?
When these are lost, are there not swords in Greece,

And flame and poison, deadly waves and plagues?
No man has ever lacked these things and gone
Unsatisfied. It is not these the gods refuse
(Nay, never clutch my sleeve and raise thy lip), —
Not these I seek; but I will stab myself,
Poison my life and burn my flesh, with words,
And save or follow thee. Lo! hearken now:
I bid the gods take back their loathsome gifts:
I spurn them, and I scorn them, and I hate.
Will they prove deaf to this as to my prayers?
With tongue reviling, blasphemous, I curse,
With mouth polluted from deliberate heart.
Dishonored be their names, scorned be their priests,
Ruined their altars, mocked their oracles!
It is Admetus, King of Thessaly,
Defaming thus: annihilate him, gods!
So that his queen, who worships you, may live."
He paused as one expectant; but no bolt
From the insulted heavens answered him,
But awful silence followed. Then a hand,
A boyish hand, upon his shoulder fell,
And turning, he beheld his shepherd boy,
Not wrathful, but divinely pitiful,
Who spake in tender, thrilling tones: "The gods
Cannot recall their gifts. Blaspheme them not:
Bow down and worship rather. Shall he curse
Who sees not, and who hears not, — neither knows

Nor understands? Nay, thou shalt bless and
pray, —
Pray, for the pure heart, purged by prayer, di-
vines
And seeth when the bolder eyes are blind.
Worship and wonder, — these befit a man
At every hour; and mayhap will the gods
Yet work a miracle for knees that bend
And hands that supplicate."
Then all they knew
A sudden sense of awe, and bowed their heads
Beneath the stripling's gaze: Admetus fell,
Crushed by that gentle touch, and cried aloud:
"Pardon and pity! I am hard beset."

There waited at the doorway of the king
One grim and ghastly, shadowy, horrible,
Bearing the likeness of a king himself,
Erect as one who serveth not, — upon
His head a crown, within his fleshless hands
A sceptre, — monstrous, winged, intolerable.
To him a stranger coming 'neath the trees,
Which slid down flakes of light, now on his hair,
Close-curled, now on his bared and brawny chest,
Now on his flexile, vine-like veinéd limbs,
With iron network of strong muscle thewed,
And godlike brows and proud mouth unrelaxed.

Firm was his step; no superfluity
Of indolent flesh impeded this man's strength.
Slender and supple every perfect limb,
Beautiful with the glory of a man.
No weapons bare he, neither shield: his hands
Folded upon his breast, his movements free
Of all incumbrance. When his mighty strides
Had brought him nigh the waiting one, he paused:
"Whose palace this? and who art thou, grim shade?"
"The palace of the King of Thessaly,
And my name is not strange unto thine ears;
For who hath told men that I wait for them,
The one sure thing on earth? Yet all they know,
Unasking and yet answered. I am Death,
The only secret that the gods reveal.
But who art thou who darest question me?"
"Alcides; and that thing I dare not do
Hath found no name. Whom here awaitest thou?"
"Alcestis, Queen of Thessaly, — a queen
Who wooed me as the bridegroom woos the bride,
For her life sacrificed will save her lord
Admetus, as the Fates decreed. I wait
Impatient, eager; and I enter soon,
With darkening wing, invisible, a god,
And kiss her lips, and kiss her throbbing heart,

And then the tenderest hands can do no more
Than close her eyes and wipe her cold, white brow,
Inurn her ashes and strew flowers above."
"This woman is a god, a hero, Death.
In this her sacrifice I see a soul
Luminous, starry: earth can spare her not:
It is not rich enough in purity
To lose this paragon. Save her, O Death!
Thou surely art more gentle than the Fates,
Yet these have spared her lord, and never meant
That she should suffer, and that this their grace,
Beautiful, royal on one side, should turn
Sudden and show a fearful, fatal face."
"Nay, have they not? O fond and foolish man,
Naught comes unlooked for, unforeseen by them.
Doubt when they favor thee, though thou mayest laugh
When they have scourged thee with an iron scourge.
Behold, their smile is deadlier than their sting,
And every boon of theirs is double-faced.
Yea, I am gentler unto ye than these:
I slay relentless, but when have I mocked
With poisoned gifts, and generous hands that smite
Under the flowers? for my name is Truth.
Were this fair queen more fair, more pure, more chaste,
I would not spare her for your wildest prayer

Nor her best virtue. Is the earth's mouth full?
Is the grave satisfied? Discrown me then,
For life is lord, and men may mock the gods
With immortality." "I sue no more,
But I command thee spare this woman's life,
Or wrestle with Alcides." "Wrestle with thee,
Thou puny boy!" And Death laughed loud, and swelled
To monstrous bulk, fierce-eyed, with outstretched wings,
And lightnings round his brow; but grave and firm,
Strong as a tower, Alcides waited him,
And these began to wrestle, and a cloud
Impenetrable fell, and all was dark.

"Farewell, Admetus and my little son,
Eumelus, — O these clinging baby hands!
Thy loss is bitter, for no chance, no fame,
No wealth of love, can ever compensate
For a dead mother. Thou, O king, fulfill
The double duty: love him with my love,
And make him bold to wrestle, shiver spears,
Noble and manly, Grecian to the bone;
And tell him that his mother spake with gods.
Farewell, farewell! Mine eyes are growing blind:
The darkness gathers. O my heart, my heart!"

No sound made answer save the cries of grief
From all the mourners, and the suppliance
Of strick'n Admetus: "O have mercy, gods!
O gods, have mercy, mercy upon us!"
Then from the dying woman's couch again
Her voice was heard, but with strange sudden tones:
"Lo, I awake, — the light comes back to me.
What miracle is this?" And thunders shook
The air, and clouds of mighty darkness fell,
And the earth trembled, and weird, horrid sounds
Were heard of rushing wings and fleeing feet,
And groans; and all were silent, dumb with awe,
Saving the king, who paused not in his prayer:
"Have mercy, gods!" and then again, "O gods,
Have mercy!"

Through the open casement poured
Bright floods of sunny light; the air was soft,
Clear, delicate as though a summer storm
Had passed away; and those there standing saw,
Afar upon the plain, Death fleeing thence,
And at the doorway, weary, well-nigh spent,
Alcides, flushed with victory.

TANNHÄUSER.

TO MY MOTHER. MAY, 1870.

The Landgrave Hermann held a gathering
Of minstrels, minnesingers, troubadours,
At Wartburg in his palace, and the knight,
Sir Tannhäuser of France, the greatest bard,
Inspired with heavenly visions, and endowed
With apprehension and rare utterance
Of noble music, fared in thoughtful wise
Across the Hörsel meadows. Full of light,
And large repose, the peaceful valley lay,
In the late splendor of the afternoon,
And level sunbeams lit the serious face
Of the young knight, who journeyed to the west,
Towards the precipitous and rugged cliffs,
Scarred, grim, and torn with savage rifts and
chasms,
That in the distance loomed as soft and fair
And purple as their shadows on the grass.
The tinkling chimes ran out athwart the air,
Proclaiming sunset, ushering evening in,
Although the sky yet glowed with yellow light.
The ploughboy, ere he led his cattle home,
In the near meadow, reverently knelt,
And doffed his cap, and duly crossed his breast,
Whispering his "Ave Mary," as he heard
The pealing vesper-bell. But still the knight,

Unmindful of the sacred hour announced,
Disdainful or unconscious, held his course.
"Would that I also, like yon stupid wight,
Could kneel and hail the Virgin and believe!"
He murmured bitterly beneath his breath.
"Were I a pagan, riding to contend
For the Olympic wreath, O with what zeal,
What fire of inspiration, would I sing
The praises of the gods! How may my lyre
Glorify these whose very life I doubt?
The world is governed by one cruel God,
Who brings a sword, not peace. A pallid Christ,
Unnatural, perfect, and a virgin cold,
They give us for a heaven of living gods,
Beautiful, loving, whose mere names were song;
A creed of suffering and despair, walled in
On every side by brazen boundaries,
That limit the soul's vision and her hope
To a red hell or an unpeopled heaven.
Yea, I am lost already, — even now
Am doomed to flaming torture for my thoughts.
O gods! O gods! where shall my soul find peace?"
He raised his wan face to the faded skies,
Now shadowing into twilight; no response
Came from their sunless heights; no miracle,
As in the ancient days of answering gods.
With a long, shuddering sigh he glanced to earth,
Finding himself among the Hörsel cliffs.

Gray, sullen, gaunt, they towered on either side;
Scant shrubs sucked meagre life between the rifts
Of their huge crags, and made small darker spots
Upon their wrinkled sides; the jaded horse
Stumbled upon loose, rattling, fallen stones,
Amidst the gathering dusk, and blindly fared
Through the weird, perilous pass. As darkness waxed,
And an oppressive mystery enwrapped
The roadstead and the rocks, Sir Tannhäuser
Fancied he saw upon the mountain-side
The fluttering of white raiment. With a sense
Of a wild joy and horror, he gave pause,
For his sagacious horse that reeked with sweat,
Trembling in every limb, confirmed his thought,
That nothing human scaled that haunted cliff.
The white thing seemed descending, — now a cloud
It looked, and now a rag of drifted mist,
Torn in the jagged gorge precipitous,
And now an apparition clad in white,
Shapely and real, — then he lost it quite,
Gazing on nothing with blank, foolish face.
As with wide eyes he stood, he was aware
Of a strange splendor at his very side,
A presence and a majesty so great,
That ere he saw, he felt it was divine.
He turned, and, leaping from his horse, fell prone,

In speechless adoration, on the earth,
Before the matchless goddess, who appeared
With no less freshness of immortal youth
Than when first risen from foam of Paphian seas.
He heard delicious strains of melody,
Such as his highest muse had ne'er attained,
Float in the air, while in the distance rang,
Harsh and discordant, jarring with those tones,
The gallop of his frightened horse's hoofs,
Clattering in sudden freedom down the pass.
A voice that made all music dissonance
Then thrilled through heart and flesh of that prone knight,
Triumphantly: "The gods need but appear,
And their usurpéd thrones are theirs again!"
Then tenderly: "Sweet knight, I pray thee, rise;
Worship me not, for I desire thy love.
Look on me, follow me, for I am fain
Of thy fair, human face." He rose and looked,
Stirred by that heavenly flattery to the soul.
Her hair, unbraided and unfilleted,
Rained in a glittering shower to the ground,
And cast forth lustre. Round her zone was clasped
The scintillant cestus, stiff with flaming gold,
Thicker with restless gems than heaven with stars.
She might have flung the enchanted wonder forth;

Her eyes, her slightest gesture would suffice
To bind all men in blissful slavery.
She sprang upon the mountain's dangerous side,
With feet that left their print in flowers divine, —
Flushed amaryllis and blue hyacinth,
Impurpled amaranth and asphodel,
Dewy with nectar, and exhaling scents
Richer than all the roses of mid-June.
The knight sped after her, with wild eyes fixed
Upon her brightness, as she lightly leapt
From crag to crag, with flying auburn hair,
Like a gold cloud, that lured him ever on,
Higher and higher up the haunted cliff.
At last amidst a grove of pines she paused,
Until he reached her, breathing hard with haste,
Delight, and wonder. Then upon his hand
She placed her own, and all his blood at once
Tingled and hotly rushed to brow and cheek,
At the supreme caress ; but the mere touch
Infused fresh life, and when she looked at him
With gracious tenderness, he felt himself
Strong suddenly to bear the blinding light
Of those great eyes. "Dear knight," she murmured low,
"For love of me, wilt thou accord this boon, —
To grace my weary home in banishment ? "
His hungry eyes gave answer ere he spoke,
In tones abrupt that startled his own ears
With their strange harshness ; but with thanks profuse

She guided him, still holding his cold hand
In her warm, dainty palm, unto a cave,
Whence a rare glory issued, and a smell
Of spice and roses, frankincense and balm.
They entering stood within a marble hall,
With straight, slim pillars, at whose farther end
The goddess led him to a spiral flight
Of stairs, descending always 'midst black gloom
Into the very bowels of the earth.
Down these, with fearful swiftness, they made way,
The knight's feet touching not the solid stair,
But sliding down as in a vexing dream,
Blind, feeling but that hand divine that still
Empowered him to walk on empty air.
Then he was dazzled by a sudden blaze,
In a vast palace filled with reveling folk.
Cunningly pictured on the ivory walls
Were rolling hills, cool lakes, and boscage green,
And all the summer landscape's various pomp.
The precious canopy aloft was carved
In semblance of the pleachéd forest trees,
Enameled with the liveliest green, wherethrough
A light pierced, more resplendent than the day.
O'er the pale, polished jasper of the floor
The goddess led him to a massy throne
Of burnished metal, fretted and embossed
With all the marvelous story of her birth
Painted in prodigal splendor of rich tincts,

And carved by heavenly artists, — crystal seas,
And long-haired Nereids in their pearly shells,
And all the wonder of her lucent limbs
Sphered in a vermeil mist. Upon the throne
She took her seat, the knight beside her still,
Sinking on couches of fresh asphodel,
And the dance ceased, and the flushed revelers came
In glittering phalanx to adore their queen.
Beautiful girls, with shining delicate heads,
Crested with living jewels, fanned the air
With flickering wings from naked shoulders soft.
Then with preluding low, a thousand harps,
And citherns, and strange nameless instruments,
Sent through the fragrant air sweet symphonies,
And the winged dancers waved in mazy rounds,
With changing lustres like a summer sea.
Fair boys, with charming yellow hair crisp-curled,
And frail, effeminate beauty, the knight saw,
But of strong, stalwart men like him were none.
He gazed thereon bewitched, until the hand
Of Venus, erst withdrawn, now fell again
Upon his own, and roused him from his trance.
He looked on her, and as he looked, a cloud
Auroral, flaming as at sunrising,
Arose from nothing, floating over them,
Dropping rich odors, and encircling them
In luminous folds, like that vermilion mist
Penciled upon the throne, and as it waxed

In density and brightness, all the throng
Of festal dancers, less and less distinct,
Grew like pale spirits in a vague, dim dream,
And vanished altogether; and these twain,
Shut from the world in that ambrosial cloud,
Now with a glory inconceivable,
Vivid and conflagrant, looked each on each.

All hours came laden with their own delights
In that enchanted palace, wherein Time
Knew no divisions harsh of night and day,
But light was always, and desire of sleep
Was satisfied at once with slumber soft,
Desire of food with magical repast,
By unseen hands on golden tables spread.
But these the knight accepted like a god,
All less was lost in that excess of joy,
The crowning marvel of her love for him,
Assuring him of his divinity.
Meanwhile remembrance of the earth appeared
Like the vague trouble of a transient dream, —
The doubt, the scruples, the remorse for thoughts
Beyond his own control, the constant thirst
For something fairer than his life, more real
Than airy revelations of his Muse.
Here was his soul's desire satisfied.
All nobler passions died; his lyre he flung
Recklessly forth, with vows to dedicate
His being to herself. She knew and seized
The moment of her mastery, and conveyed
The lyre beyond his sight and memory.

With blandishments divine she changed for him,
Each hour, her mood ; a very woman now,
Fantastic, voluble, affectionate,
And jealous of the vague, unbodied air,
Exacting, penitent, and pacified,
All in a breath. And often she appeared
Majestic with celestial wrath, with eyes
That shot forth fire, and a heavy brow,
Portentous as the lowering front of heaven,
When the reverberant, sullen thunder rolls
Among the echoing clouds. Thus she denounced
Her ancient, fickle worshippers, who left
Her altars desecrate, her fires unfed,
Her name forgotten. "But I reign, I reign!"
She would shrill forth, triumphant ; "yea, I reign.
Men name me not, but worship me unnamed,
Beauty and Love within their heart of hearts ;
Not with bent knees and empty breath of words,
But with devoted sacrifice of lives."
Then melting in a moment, she would weep
Ambrosial tears, pathetic, full of guile,
Accusing her own base ingratitude,
In craving worship, when she had his heart,
Her priceless knight, her peerless paladin,
Her Tannhäuser ; then, with an artful glance
Of lovely helplessness, entreated him
Not to desert her, like the faithless world,
For these unbeautiful and barbarous gods,
Or she would never cease her prayers to Jove,
Until he took from her the heavy curse

Of immortality. With closer vows,
The knight then sealed his worship and forswore
All other aims and deeds to serve her cause.
Thus passed unnoted seven barren years
Of reckless passion and voluptuous sloth,
Undignified by any lofty thought
In his degraded mind, that sometime was
Endowed with noble capability.
From revelry to revelry he passed,
Craving more pungent pleasures momently,
And new intoxications, and each hour
The siren goddess answered his desires.
Once when she left him with a weary sense
Of utter lassitude, he sat alone,
And, raising listless eyes, he saw himself
In a great burnished mirror, wrought about
With cunning imagery of twisted vines.
He scarcely knew those sunken, red-rimmed eyes,
And haggard cheeks, and hollow-smiling lips,
For his who in the flush of manhood rode
Among the cliffs, and followed up the crags
The flying temptress; and there fell on him
A horror of her beauty, a disgust
For his degenerate and corrupted life,
With irresistible, intense desire,
To feel the breath of heaven on his face.
Then as Fate willed, who rules above the gods,
He saw, within the glass, behind him glide
The form of Venus. Certain of her power,
She had laid by, in fond security,

The enchanted cestus, and Sir Tannhäuser,
With surfeited regard, beheld her now,
No fairer than the women of the earth,
Whom with serenity and health he left,
Duped by a lovely witch. Before he moved,
She knew her destiny; and when he turned,
He seemed to drop a mask, disclosing thus
An alien face, and eyes with vision true,
That for long time with glamour had been blind.
Hiding the hideous rage within her breast,
With girlish simpleness of folded hands,
Auroral blushes, and sweet, shamefast mien,
She spoke: "Behold, my love, I have cast forth
All magic, blandishments, and sorcery,
For I have dreamed a dream so terrible,
That I awoke to find my pillow stained
With tears as of real woe. I thought my belt,
By Vulcan wrought with matchless skill and
power,
Was the sole bond between us; this being doffed,
I seemed to thee an old, unlovely crone,
Wrinkled by every year that I have seen.
Thou turnedst from me with a brutal sneer,
So that I woke with weeping. Then I rose,
And drew the glittering girdle from my zone,
Jealous thereof, yet full of fears, and said,
'If it be this he loves, then let him go!
I have no solace as a mortal hath,
No hope of change or death to comfort me
Through all eternity; yet he is free,

Though I could hold him fast with heavy chains,
Bound in perpetual imprisonment.'
Tell me my vision was a baseless dream;
See, I am kneeling, and I kiss thy hands, —
In pity, look on me, before thy word
Condemns me to immortal misery!"
As he looked down, the infernal influence
Worked on his soul again; for she was fair
Beyond imagination, and her brow
Seemed luminous with high self-sacrifice.
He bent and kissed her head, warm, shining, soft,
With its close-curling gold, and love revived.
But ere he spoke, he heard the distant sound
Of one sweet, smitten lyre, and a gleam
Of violent anger flashed across the face
Upraised to his in feigned simplicity
And singleness of purpose. Then he sprang,
Well-nigh a god himself, with sudden strength
To vanquish and resist, beyond her reach,
Crying, "My old Muse calls me, and I hear!
Thy fateful vision is no baseless dream;
I will be gone from this accursed hall!"
Then she, too, rose, dilating over him,
And sullen clouds veiled all her rosy limbs,
Unto her girdle, and her head appeared
Refulgent, and her voice rang wrathfully:
"Have I cajoled and flattered thee till now,
To lose thee thus! How wilt thou make escape?
Once being mine, thou art forever mine:
Yea, not my love, but my poor slave and fool."

But he, with both hands pressed upon his eyes,
Against that blinding lustre, heeded not
Her thundered words, and cried in sharp despair,
"Help me, O Virgin Mary!" and thereat,
The very bases of the hall gave way,
The roof was rived, the goddess disappeared,
And Tannhäuser stood free upon the cliff,
Amidst the morning sunshine and fresh air.

Around him were the tumbled blocks and crags,
Huge ridges and sharp juts of flinty peaks,
Black caves, and masses of the grim, bald rock.
The ethereal, unfathomable sky,
Hung over him, the valley lay beneath,
Dotted with yellow hayricks, that exhaled
Sweet, healthy odors to the mountain-top.
He breathed intoxicate the infinite air,
And plucked the heather blossoms where they blew,
Reckless with light and dew, in crannies green,
And scarcely saw their darling bells for tears.
No sounds of labor reached him from the farms
And hamlets trim, nor from the furrowed glebe;
But a serene and sabbath stillness reigned,
Till broken by the faint, melodious chimes
Of the small village church that called to prayer.
He hurried down the rugged, scarpéd cliff,
And swung himself from shelving granite slopes
To narrow foot-holds, near wide-throated chasms,

Tearing against sharp stones his bleeding hands,
With long hair flying from his dripping brow,
Uncovered head, and white, exalted face.
No memory had he of his smooth ascent,
No thought of fear upon those dreadful hills;
He only heard the bell, inviting him
To satisfy the craving of his heart,
For worship 'midst his fellow-men. He reached
The beaten, dusty road, and passed thereon
The pious peasants faring towards the church,
And scarce refrained from greeting them like friends
Dearly beloved, after long absence met.
How more than fair the sunburnt wenches looked,
In their rough, homespun gowns and coifs demure,
After the beauty of bare, rosy limbs,
And odorous, loose hair! He noted not
Suspicious glances on his garb uncouth,
His air extravagant and face distraught,
With bursts of laughter from the red-cheeked boys,
And prudent crossings of the women's breasts.
He passed the flowering close about the church,
And trod the well-worn path, with throbbing heart,
The little heather-bell between his lips,
And his eyes fastened on the good green grass.
Thus entered he the sanctuary, lit
With frequent tapers, and with sunbeams stained

Through painted glass. How pure and innocent
The waiting congregation seemed to him,
Kneeling, or seated with calm brows upraised!
With faltering strength, he cowered down alone,
And held sincere communion with the Lord,
For one brief moment, in a sudden gush
Of blesséd tears. The minister of God
Rose to invoke a blessing on his flock,
And then began the service, — not in words
To raise the lowly, and to heal the sick,
But in an alien tongue, with phrases formed,
And meaningless observances. The knight,
Unmoved, yet thirsting for the simple word
That might have moved him, held his bitter thoughts,
But when in his own speech a new priest spake,
Looked up with hope revived, and heard the text:
"Go, preach the Gospel unto all the world.
He that believes and is baptized, is saved.
He that believeth not, is damned in hell!"
He sat with neck thrust forth and staring eyes;
The crowded congregation disappeared;
He felt alone in some black sea of hell,
While a great light smote one exalted face,
Vivid already with prophetic fire,
Whose fatal mouth now thundered forth his doom.
He longed in that void circle to cry out,
With one clear shriek, but sense and voice seemed bound,

And his parched tongue clave useless to his mouth.
As the last words resounded through the church,
And once again the pastor blessed his flock,
Who, serious and subdued, passed slowly down
The narrow aisle, none noted, near the wall,
A fallen man with face upon his knees,
A heap of huddled garments and loose hair,
Unconscious 'mid the rustling, murmurous stir,
'Midst light and rural smell of grass and flowers,
Let in athwart the doorway. One lone priest,
Darkening the altar lights, moved noiselessly,
Now with the yellow glow upon his face,
Now a black shadow gliding farther on,
Amidst the smooth, slim pillars of hewn ash.
But from the vacant aisles he heard at once
A hollow sigh, heaved from a depth profound.
Upholding his last light above his head,
And peering eagerly amidst the stalls,
He cried, "Be blest who cometh in God's name."
Then the gaunt form of Tannhäuser arose.
"Father, I am a sinner, and I seek
Forgiveness and help, by whatso means
I can regain the joy of peace with God."
"The Lord hath mercy on the penitent.
'Although thy sins be scarlet,' He hath said,
'Will I not make them white as wool?' Confess,
And I will shrive you." Thus the good priest moved

Towards the remorseful knight and pressed his hand.
But shrinking down, he drew his fingers back
From the kind palm, and kissed the friar's feet.
"Thy pure hand is anointed, and can heal.
The cool, calm pressure brings back sanity,
And what serene, past joys! yet touch me not,
My contact is pollution, — hear, O hear,
While I disburden my charged soul." He lay,
Casting about for words and strength to speak.
"O father, is there help for such a one,"
In tones of deep abasement he began,
"Who hath rebelled against the laws of God,
With pride no less presumptuous than his
Who lost thereby his rank in heaven?" "My son,
There is atonement for all sins, — or slight
Or difficult, proportioned to the crime.
Though this may be the staining of thy hands
With blood of kinsmen or of fellow-men."
"My hands are white, — my crime hath found no name,
This side of hell; yet though my heart-strings snap
To live it over, let me make attempt.
I was a knight and bard, with such a gift
Of revelation that no hour of life
Lacked beauty and adornment, in myself
The seat and centre of all happiness.
What inspiration could my lofty Muse

Draw from those common and familiar themes,
Painted upon the windows and the walls
Of every church, — the mother and her child,
The miracle and mystery of the birth,
The death, the resurrection? Fool and blind!
That saw not symbols of eternal truth
In that grand tragedy and victory,
Significant and infinite as life.
What tortures did my skeptic soul endure,
At war against herself and all mankind!
The restless nights of feverish sleeplessness,
With balancing of reasons nicely weighed;
The dawn that brought no hope nor energy,
The blasphemous arraignment of the Lord,
Taxing His glorious divinity
With all the grief and folly of the world.
Then came relapses into abject fear,
And hollow prayer and praise from craven heart.
Before a sculptured Venus I would kneel,
Crown her with flowers, worship her, and cry,
'O large and noble type of our ideal,
At least my heart and prayer return to thee,
Amidst a faithless world of proselytes.
Madonna Mary, with her virgin lips,
And eyes that look perpetual reproach,
Insults and is a blasphemy on youth.
Is she to claim the worship of a man
Hot with the first rich flush of ripened life?'
Realities, like phantoms, glided by,

Unnoted 'midst the torments and delights
Of my conflicting spirit, and I doffed
The modest Christian weeds of charity
And fit humility, and steeled myself
In pagan panoply of stoicism
And self-sufficing pride. Yet constantly
I gained men's charmed attention and applause,
With the wild strains I smote from out my lyre,
To me the native language of my soul,
To them attractive and miraculous,
As all things whose solution and whose source
Remain a mystery. Then came suddenly
The summons to attend the gathering
Of minstrels at the Landgrave Hermann's court.
Resolved to publish there my pagan creed
In harmonies so high and beautiful
That all the world would share my zeal and
faith,
I journeyed towards the haunted Hörsel cliffs.
O God! how may I tell you how *she* came,
The temptress of a hundred centuries,
Yet fresh as April? She bewitched my sense,
Poisoned my judgment with sweet flatteries,
And for I may not guess how many years
Held me a captive in degrading bonds.
There is no sin of lust so lewd and foul,
Which I learned not in that alluring hell,
Until this morn, I snapped the ignoble tie,
By calling on the Mother of our Lord.
O for the power to stand again erect,

And look men in the eyes! What penitence,
What scourging of the flesh, what rigid fasts,
What terrible privations may suffice
To cleanse me in the sight of God and man?"
Ill-omened silence followed his appeal.
Patient and motionless he lay awhile,
Then sprang unto his feet with sudden force,
Confronting in his breathless vehemence,
With palpitating heart, the timid priest.
"Answer me, as you hope for a response,
One day, at the great judgment-seat yourself."
"I cannot answer," said the simple priest,
"I have not understood." "Just God! is this
The curse Thou layest upon me? I outstrip
The sympathy and brotherhood of men,
So far removed is my experience
From their clean innocence. Inspire me,
Prompt me to words that bring me near to them!
Father," in gentler accents he resumed,
"Thank Heaven at your every orison
That sin like mine you cannot apprehend.
More than the truth perchance I have confessed,
But I have sinned, and darkly, — this is true;
And I have suffered, and am suffering now.
Is there no help in your great Christian creed
Of liberal charity, for such a one?"
"My son," the priest replied, "your speech distraught
Hath quite bewildered me. I fain would hope

That Christ's large charity can reach your sin,
But I know naught. I cannot but believe
That the enchantress who first tempted you
Must be the Evil one, — your early doubt
Was the possession of your soul by him.
Travel across the mountain to the town,
The first cathedral town upon the road
That leads to Rome, — a sage and reverend priest,
The Bishop Adrian, bides there. Say you have come
From his leal servant, Friar Lodovick;
He hath vast lore and great authority,
And may absolve you freely of your sin."

Over the rolling hills, through summer fields,
By noisy villages and lonely lanes,
Through glowing days, when all the landscape stretched
Shimmering in the heat, a pilgrim fared
Towards the cathedral town. Sir Tannhäuser
Had donned the mournful sackcloth, girt his loins
With a coarse rope that ate into his flesh,
Muffled a cowl about his shaven head,
Hung a great leaden cross around his neck;
And bearing in his hands a knotty staff,
With swollen, sandaled feet he held his course.
He snatched scant rest at twilight or at dawn,
When his forced travel was least difficult.
But most he journeyed when the sky, o'ercast,

Uprolled its threatening clouds of dusky blue,
And angry thunder grumbled through the hills,
And earth grew dark at noonday, till the flash
Of the thin lightning through the wide sky leapt,
And tumbling showers scoured along the plain.
Then folk who saw the pilgrim penitent,
Drenched, weird, and hastening as to some strange doom,
Swore that the wandering Jew had crossed their land,
And the Lord Christ had sent the deadly bolt
Harmless upon his cursed, immortal head.
At length the hill-side city's spires and roofs,
With all its western windows smitten red
By a rich sunset, and with massive towers
Of its cathedral overtopping all,
Greeted his sight. Some weary paces more,
And as the twilight deepened in the streets,
He stood within the minster. How serene,
In sculptured calm of centuries, it seemed!
How cool and spacious all the dim-lit aisles,
Still hazy with the fumes of frankincense!
The vesper had been said, yet here and there
A wrinkled beldam, or a mourner veiled,
Or burly burgher on the cold floor knelt,
And still the organist, with wandering hands,
Drew from the keys mysterious melodies,
And filled the church with flying waifs of song,
That with ethereal beauty moved the soul
To a more tender prayer and gentler faith

Than choral anthems and the solemn mass.
A thousand memories, sweet to bitterness,
Rushed on the knight and filled his eyes with tears;
Youth's blamelessness and faith forever lost,
The love of his neglected lyre, his art,
Revived by these aerial harmonies.
He was unworthy now to touch the strings,
Too base to stir men's soul to ecstasy
And high resolves, as in the days agone;
And yet, with all his spirit's earnestness,
He yearned to feel the lyre between his hands,
To utter all the trouble of his life
Unto the Muse who understands and helps.
Outworn with travel, soothed to drowsiness
By dying music and sweet-scented air,
His limbs relaxed, and sleep possessed his frame.
Auroral light the eastern oriels touched,
When with delicious sense of rest he woke,
Amidst the vast and silent empty aisles.
"God's peace hath fallen upon me in this place;
This is my Bethel; here I feel again
A holy calm, if not of innocence,
Yet purest after that, the calm serene
Of expiation and forgiveness."
He spake, and passed with staff and wallet forth
Through the tall portal to the open square,
And turning, paused to look upon the pile.
The northern front against the crystal sky
Loomed dark and heavy, full of sombre shade,

With each projecting buttress, carven cross,
Gable and mullion, tipped with laughing light
By the slant sunbeams of the risen morn.
The noisy swallows wheeled above their nests,
Builded in hidden nooks about the porch.
No human life was stirring in the square,
Save now and then a rumbling market-team,
Fresh from the fields and farms without the town.
He knelt upon the broad cathedral steps,
And kissed the moistened stone, while overhead
The circling swallows sang, and all around
The mighty city lay asleep and still.

To stranger's ears must yet again be made
The terrible confession; yet again
A deathly chill, with something worse than fear,
Seized the knight's heart, who knew his every word
Widened the gulf between his kind and him.
The Bishop sat with pomp of mitred head,
In pride of proven virtue, hearkening all
With cold, official apathy, nor made
A sign of pity nor encouragement.
The friar understood the pilgrim's grief,
The language of his eyes; his speech alone
Was alien to these kind, untutored ears.
But this was truly to be misconstrued,
To tear each palpitating word alive
From out the depths of his remorseful soul,

And have it weighed with the precision cool
And the nice logic of a reasoning mind.
This spiritual Father judged his crime
As the mad mischief of a reckless boy,
That called for strict, immediate punishment.
But Tannhäuser, who felt himself a man,
Though base, yet fallen through passions and rare gifts
Of an exuberant nature rankly rich,
And knew his weary head was growing gray
With a life's terrible experience,
Found his old sense of proper worth revive;
But modestly he ended: "Yet I felt,
O holy Father, in the church, this morn,
A strange security, a peace serene,
As though e'en yet the Lord regarded me
With merciful compassion; yea, as though
Even so vile a worm as I might work
Mine own salvation, through repentant prayers."
"Presumptuous man, it is no easy task
To expiate such sin; a space of prayer
That deprecates the anger of the Lord,
A pilgrimage through pleasant summer lands,
May not atone for years of impious lust;
Thy heart hath lied to thee in offering hope."
"Is there no hope on earth?" the pilgrim sighed.
"None through thy penance," said the saintly man.
"Yet there may be through mediation, help.
There is a man who by a blameless life

Hath won the right to intercede with God.
No sins of his own flesh hath he to purge, —
The Cardinal Filippo, — he abides,
Within the Holy City. Seek him out ;
This is my only counsel, — through thyself
Can be no help and no forgiveness."

How different from the buoyant joy of morn
Was this discouraged sense of lassitude,
Wherewith the pilgrim, 'midst a summer rain,
Pursued his progress through the cheerless squares!
The Bishop's words were ringing in his ears,
Measured and pitiless, and, blent with these,
The memory of the goddess' last wild cry, —
"*Once being mine, thou art forever mine.*"
Was it the truth, despite his penitence,
And dedication of his thought to God,
That still some portion of himself was hers,
Some lust survived, some criminal regret,
For her corrupted love? He searched his heart:
All was remorse, religious and sincere,
And yet her dreadful curse still haunted him;
For all men shunned him, and denied him help,
Knowing at once in looking on his face,
Ploughed with deep lines and prematurely old,
That he had struggled with some deadly fiend,
And that he was no longer kin to them.
Just past the outskirts of the town, he stopped,
To strengthen will and courage to proceed.

The storm had broken o'er the sultry streets,
But now the lessening clouds were flying east,
And though the gentle shower still wet his face,
The west was cloudless while the sun went down,
And the bright seven-colored arch stood forth,
Against the opposite dull gray. There was
A beauty in the mingled storm and peace,
Beyond clear sunshine, as the vast, green fields
Basked in soft light, though glistening yet with rain.
The roar of all the town was now a buzz
Less than the insects' drowsy murmuring
That whirred their gauzy wings around his head.
The breeze that follows on the sunsetting
Was blowing whiffs of bruised and dripping grass
Into the heated city. But he stood,
Disconsolate with thoughts of fate and sin,
Still wrestling with his soul to win it back
From her who claimed it to eternity.
Then on the delicate air there came to him
The intonation of the minster bells,
Chiming the vespers, musical and faint.
He knew not what of dear and beautiful
There was in those familiar peals, that spake
Of his first boyhood and his innocence,
Leading him back, with gracious influence,
To pleasant thoughts and tender memories,
And last, recalling the fair hour of hope
He passed that morning in the church. Again,

The glad assurance of God's boundless love
Filled all his being, and he rose serene,
And journeyed forward with a calm content.

Southward he wended, and the landscape took
A warmer tone, the sky a richer light.
The gardens of the graceful, festooned hops,
With their slight tendrils binding pole to pole,
Gave place to orchards and the trellised grape.
The hedges were enwreathed with trailing vines,
With clustering, shapely bunches, 'midst the growth
Of tangled greenery. The elm and ash
Less frequent grew than cactus, cypresses,
And golden-fruited or large-blossomed trees.
The far hills took the hue of the dove's breast,
Veiled in gray mist of olive groves. No more
He passed dark, moated strongholds of grim knights,
But terraces with marble-paven steps,
With fountains leaping in the sunny air,
And hanging gardens full of sumptuous bloom.
Then cloisters guarded by their dead gray walls,
Where now and then a golden globe of fruit
Or full-flushed flower peered out upon the road,
Nodding against the stone, and where he heard
Sometimes the voices of the chanting monks,
Sometimes the laugh of children at their play,
Amidst the quaint, old gardens. But these sights
Were in the suburbs of the wealthy towns.

For many a day through wildernesses rank,
Or marshy, feverous meadow-lands he fared,
The fierce sun smiting his close-muffled head;
Or 'midst the Alpine gorges faced the storm,
That drave adown the gullies melted snow
And clattering boulders from the mountain-tops.
At times, between the mountains and the sea
Fair prospects opened, with the boundless stretch
Of restless, tideless waters by his side,
And their long wash upon the yellow sand.
Beneath this generous sky the country-folk
Could lead a freer life, — the fat, green fields
Offered rich pasturage, athwart the air
Rang tinkling cow-bells and the shepherds' pipes.
The knight met many a strolling troubadour,
Bearing his cithern, flute, or dulcimer;
And oft beneath some castle's balcony,
At night, he heard their mellow voices rise,
Blent with stringed instruments or tambourines,
Chanting some lay as natural as a bird's.
Then Nature stole with healthy influence
Into his thoughts; his love of beauty woke,
His Muse inspired dreams as in the past.
But after this came crueler remorse,
And he would tighten round his loins the rope,
And lie for hours beside some wayside cross,
And feel himself unworthy to enjoy
The splendid gift and privilege of life.
Then forth he hurried, spurred by his desire
To reach the City of the Seven Hills,

And gain his absolution. Some leagues more
Would bring him to the vast Campagna land,
When by a roadside well he paused to rest.
'T was noon, and reapers in the field hard by
Lay 'neath the trees upon the sun-scorched grass.
But from their midst one came towards the well,
Not trudging like a man forespent with toil,
But frisking like a child in holiday,
With light, free steps. The pilgrim watched him come,
And found him scarcely older than a child,
A large-mouthed earthen pitcher in his hand,
And a guitar upon his shoulder slung.
A wide straw hat threw all his face in shade,
But doffing this, to catch whatever breeze
Might stir among the branches, he disclosed
A charming head of rippled, auburn hair,
A frank, fair face, as lovely as a girl's,
With great, soft eyes, as mild and grave as kine's.
Above his head he slipped the instrument,
And laid it with his hat upon the turf,
Lowered his pitcher down the well-head cool,
And drew it dripping upward, ere he saw
The watchful pilgrim, craving (as he thought)
The precious draught. "Your pardon, holy sir,
Drink first," he cried, "before I take the jar
Unto my father in the reaping-field."
Touched by the cordial kindness of the lad,
The pilgrim answered, — "Thanks, my thirst is quenched

From mine own palm." The stranger deftly poised
The brimming pitcher on his head, and turned
Back to the reaping-folk, while Tannhäuser
Looked after him across the sunny fields,
Clasping each hand about his waist to bear
The balanced pitcher; then, down glancing, found
The lad's guitar near by, and fell at once
To striking its tuned strings with wandering hands,
And pensive eyes filled full of tender dreams.
"Yea, holy sir, it is a worthless thing,
And yet I love it, for I make it speak."
The boy again stood by him, and dispelled
His train of fantasies half sweet, half sad.
"That was not in my thought," the knight replied.
"Its worth is more than rubies; whoso hath
The art to make this speak is raised thereby
Above all loneliness or grief or fear."
More to himself than to the lad he spake,
Who, understanding not, stood doubtfully
At loss for answer; but the knight went on:
"How came it in your hands, and who hath tuned
Your voice to follow it." "I am unskilled,
Good father, but my mother smote its strings
To music rare." Diverted from one theme,
Pleased with the winsome candor of the boy,

The knight encouraged him to confidence;
Then his own gift of minstrelsy revealed,
And told bright tales of his first wanderings,
When in lords' castles and kings' palaces
Men still made place for him, for in his land
The gift was rare and valued at its worth,
And brought great victory and sounding fame.
Thus, in retracing all his pleasant youth,
His suffering passed as though it had not been.
Wide-eyed and open-mouthed the boy gave ear,
His fair face flushing with the sudden thoughts
That went and came, — then, as the pilgrim ceased,
Drew breath and spake: "And where now is your lyre?"
The knight with both hands hid his changed, white face,
Crying aloud, "Lost! lost! forever lost!"
Then, gathering strength, he bared his face again
Unto the frightened, wondering boy, and rose
With hasty fear. "Ah, child, you bring me back
Unwitting to remembrance of my grief,
For which I donned eternal garb of woe;
And yet I owe you thanks for one sweet hour
Of healthy human intercourse and peace.
'T is not for me to tarry by the way.
Farewell!" The impetuous, remorseful boy,
Seeing sharp pain on that kind countenance,
Fell at his feet and cried, "Forgive my words,

Witless but innocent, and leave me not
Without a blessing." Moved unutterably,
The pilgrim kissed with trembling lips his head,
And muttered, "At this moment would to God
That I were worthy!" Then waved wasted hands
Over the youth in act of blessing him,
But faltered, "Cleanse me through his innocence,
O heavenly Father!" and with quickening steps
Hastened away upon the road to Rome.
The noon was past, the reapers drew broad swaths
With scythes sun-smitten 'midst the ripened crop.
Thin shadows of the afternoon slept soft
On the green meadows as the knight passed forth.

He trudged amidst the sea of poisonous flowers
On the Campagna's undulating plain,
With Rome, the many-steepled, many-towered,
Before him, regnant on her throne of hills.
A thick blue cloud of haze o'erhung the town,
But the fast-sinking sun struck fiery light
From shining crosses, roofs, and flashing domes.
Across his path an arching bridge of stone
Was raised above a shrunken yellow stream,
Hurrying with the light on every wave
Towards the great town and outward to the sea.
Upon the bridge's crest he paused, and leaned
Against the barrier, throwing back his cowl,

And gazed upon the dull, unlovely flood
That was the Tiber. Quaggy banks lay bare,
Muddy and miry, glittering in the sun,
And myriad insects hovered o'er the reeds,
Whose lithe, moist tips by listless airs were stirred.
When the low sun had dropped behind the hills,
He found himself within the streets of Rome,
Walking as in a sleep, where naught seemed real.
The clattering hubbub of the market-place
Was over now; but voices smote his ear
Of garrulous citizens who jostled past.
Loud cries, gay laughter, snatches of sweet song,
The tinkling fountains set in gardens cool
About the pillared palaces, and blent
With trickling of the conduits in the squares,
The noisy teams within the narrow streets, —
All these the stranger heard and did not hear,
While ringing bells pealed out above the town,
And calm gray twilight skies stretched over it.
Wide open stood the doors of every church,
And through the porches pressed a streaming throng.
Vague wonderment perplexed him, at the sight
Of broken columns raised to Jupiter
Beside the cross, immense cathedrals reared
Upon a dead faith's ruins; all the whirl
And eager bustle of the living town
Filling the storied streets, whose very stones

Were solemn monuments, and spake of death.
Although he wrestled with himself, the thought
Of that poor, past religion smote his heart
With a huge pity and deep sympathy,
Beyond the fervor which the Church inspired.
Where was the noble race who ruled the world,
Moulded of purest elements, and stuffed
With sternest virtues, every man a king,
Wearing the purple native in his heart?
These lounging beggars, stealthy monks and priests,
And womanish patricians filled their place.
Thus Tannhäuser, still half an infidel,
Pagan through mind and Christian through the heart,
Fared thoughtfully with wandering, aimless steps,
Till in the dying glimmer of the day
He raised his eyes and found himself alone
Amid the ruined arches, broken shafts,
And huge arena of the Coliseum.
He did not see it as it was, dim-lit
By something less than day and more than night,
With wan reflections of the rising moon
Rather divined than seen on ivied walls,
And crumbled battlements, and topless columns —
But by the light of all the ancient days,
Ringed with keen eager faces, living eyes,

Fixed on the circus with a savage joy,
Where brandished swords flashed white, and human blood
Streamed o'er the thirsty dust, and Death was king.
He started, shuddering, and drew breath to see
The foul pit choked with weeds and tumbled stones,
The cross raised midmost, and the peaceful moon
Shining o'er all; and fell upon his knees,
Restored to faith in one wise, loving God.
Day followed day, and still he bode in Rome,
Waiting his audience with the Cardinal,
And from the gates, on pretext frivolous,
Passed daily forth, — his Eminency slept, —
Again, his Eminency was fatigued
By tedious sessions of the Papal court,
And thus the patient pilgrim was referred
Unto a later hour. At last the page
Bore him a missive with Filippo's seal,
That in his name commended Tannhäuser
Unto the Pope. The worn, discouraged knight
Read the brief scroll, then sadly forth again,
Along the bosky alleys of the park,
Passed to the glare and noise of summer streets.
"Good God!" he muttered, "Thou hast ears for all,
And sendest help and comfort; yet these men,
Thy saintly ministers, must deck themselves

With arrogance, and from their large delight
In all the beauty of the beauteous earth,
And peace of indolent, untempted souls,
Deny the hungry outcast a bare word."
Yet even as he nourished bitter thoughts,
He felt a depth of clear serenity,
Unruffled in his heart beneath it all.
No outward object now had farther power
To wound him there, for brooding o'er those deeps
Of vast contrition was a boundless hope.

Yet not to leave a human chance untried,
He sought the absolution of the Pope.
In a great hall with airy galleries,
Thronged with high dignitaries of the Church,
He took his seat amidst the humblest friars.
Through open windows came sweet garden smells,
Bright morning light, and twittered song of birds.
Around the hall flashed gold and sunlit gems,
And splendid wealth of color, — white-stoled priests,
And scarlet cardinals, and bishops clad
In violet vestments, — while beneath the shade
Of the high gallery huddled dusky shapes,
With faded, travel-tattered, sombre smocks,
And shaven heads, and girdles of coarse hemp;
Some, pilgrims penitent like Tannhäuser;

Some, devotees to kiss the sacred feet.
The brassy blare of trumpets smote the air,
Shrill pipes and horns with swelling clamor came,
And through the doorway's wide-stretched tapestries
Passed the Pope's trumpeters and mace-bearers,
His vergers bearing slender silver wands,
Then mitred bishops, red-clad cardinals,
The stalwart Papal Guard with halberds raised,
And then, with white head crowned with gold ingemmed,
The vicar of the lowly Galilean,
Holding his pastoral rod of smooth-hewn wood,
With censers swung before and peacock fans
Waved constantly by pages, either side.
Attended thus, they bore him to his throne,
And priests and laymen fell upon their knees.
Then, after pause of brief and silent prayer,
The pilgrims singly through the hall defiled,
To kiss the borders of the papal skirts,
Smiting their foreheads on the paven stone;
Some silent, abject, some accusing them
Of venial sins in accents of remorse,
Craving his grace, and passing pardoned forth.
Sir Tannhäuser came last, no need for him
To cry "Peccavi," and crook suppliant knees.
His gray head rather crushed than bowed, his face
Livid and wasted, his deep thoughtful eyes,

His tall gaunt form in those unseemly weeds,
Spake more than eloquence. His hollow voice
Brake silence, saying, "I am Tannhäuser.
For seven years I lived apart from men,
Within the Venusberg." A horror seized
The assembled folk; some turbulently rose;
Some clamored, "From the presence cast him forth!"
But the knight never ceased his steady gaze
Upon the Pope. At last, — "I have not spoken
To be condemned," he said, "by such as these.
Thou, spiritual Father, answer me.
Look thou upon me with the eyes of Christ.
Can I through expiation gain my shrift,
And work mine own redemption?" "Insolent man!"
Thundered the outraged Pope, "is this the tone
Wherewith thou dost parade thy loathsome sin?
Down on thy knees, and wallow on the earth!
Nay, rather go! there is no ray of hope,
No gleam, through cycles of eternity,
For the redemption of a soul like thine.
Yea, sooner shall my pastoral rod branch forth
In leaf and blossom, and green shoots of spring,
Than Christ will pardon thee." And as he spoke,
He struck the rod upon the floor with force
That gave it entrance 'twixt two loosened tiles,
So that it stood, fast-rooted and alone.
The knight saw naught, he only heard his judge

Ring forth his curses, and the court cry out
"Anathema!" and loud, and blent therewith,
Derisive laughter in the very hall,
And a wild voice that thrilled through flesh and heart:
"*Once being mine, thou art forever mine!*"
Half-mad he clasped both hands upon his brow,
Amidst the storm of voices, till they died,
And all was silence, save the reckless song
Of a young bird upon a twig without.
Then a defiant, ghastly face he raised,
And shrieked, "'T is false! I am no longer thine!"
And through the windows open to the park,
Rushed forth, beyond the sight and sound of men.

By church nor palace paused he, till he passed
All squares and streets, and crossed the bridge of stone,
And stood alone amidst the broad expanse
Of the Campagna, twinkling in the heat.
He knelt upon a knoll of turf, and snapped
The cord that held the cross about his neck,
And far from him the leaden burden flung.
"O God! I thank Thee, that my faith in Thee
Subsists at last, through all discouragements.
Between us must no type nor symbol stand,
No mediator, were he more divine
Than the incarnate Christ. All forms, all priests,

I part aside, and hold communion free
Beneath the empty sky of noon, with naught
Between my nothingness and thy high heavens —
Spirit with spirit. O, have mercy, God!
Cleanse me from lust and bitterness and pride,
Have mercy in accordance with my faith."
Long time he lay upon the scorching grass,
With his face buried in the tangled weeds.
Ah! who can tell the struggles of his soul
Against its demons in that sacred hour,
The solitude, the anguish, the remorse?
When shadows long and thin lay on the ground,
Shivering with fever, helpless he arose,
But with a face divine, ineffable,
Such as we dream the face of Israel,
When the Lord's wrestling angel, at gray dawn,
Blessed him, and disappeared.
Upon the marsh,
All night, he wandered, striving to emerge
From the wild, pathless plain, — now limitless
And colorless beneath the risen moon;
Outstretching like a sea, with landmarks none,
Save broken aqueducts and parapets,
And ruined columns glinting 'neath the moon.
His dress was dank and clinging with the dew;
A thousand insects fluttered o'er his head,
With buzz and drone; unseen cicadas chirped
Among the long, rank grass, and far and near
The fire-flies flickered through the summer air.

Vague thoughts and gleams prophetic filled his brain.
"Ah, fool!" he mused, "to look for help from men.
Had they the will to aid, they lack the power.
In mine own flesh and soul the sin had birth,
Through mine own anguish it must be atoned.
Our saviours are not saints and ministers,
But tear-strung women, children soft of heart,
Or fellow-sufferers, who, by some chance word,
Some glance of comfort, save us from despair.
These I have found, thank heaven! to strengthen trust
In mine own kind, when all the world grew dark.
Make me not proud in spirit, O my God!
Yea, in thy sight I am one mass of sin,
One black and foul corruption, yet I know
My frailty is exceeded by thy love.
Neither is this the slender straw of hope,
Whereto I, drowning, cling, but firm belief,
That fills my inmost soul with vast content.
As surely as the hollow faiths of old
Shriveled to dust before one ray of Truth,
So will these modern temples pass away,
Piled upon rotten doctrines, baseless forms,
And man will look in his own breast for help,
Yea, search for comfort his own inward reins,
Revere himself, and find the God within.
Patience and patience!" Through the sleepless night

He held such thoughts ; at times before his eyes
Flashed glimpses of the Church that was to be,
Sublimely simple in the light serene
Of future ages ; then the vision changed
To the Pope's hall, thronged with high priests, who hurled
Their curses on him. Staggering, he awoke
Unto the truth, and found himself alone,
Beneath the awful stars. When dawn's first chill
Crept through the shivering grass and heavy leaves,
Giddy and overcome, he fell and slept
Upon the dripping weeds, nor dreamed nor stirred,
Until the wide plain basked in noon's broad light.
He dragged his weary frame some paces more,
Unto a solitary herdsman's hut,
Which, in the vagueness of the moonlit night,
Was touched with lines of beauty, till it grew
Fair as the ruined works of ancient art,
Now squat and hideous with its wattled roof,
Decaying timbers, and loose door wide oped,
Half-fallen from the hinge. A drowsy man,
Bearded and burnt, in shepherd habit lay,
Stretched on the floor, slow-munching, half asleep,
His frugal fare ; for thus, at blaze of noon,
The shepherds sought a shelter from the sun,
Leaving their vigilant dogs beside their flock.

The knight craved drink and bread, and with respect
For pilgrim weeds, the Roman herdsman stirred
His lazy length, and shared with him his meal.
Refreshed and calm, Sir Tannhäuser passed forth,
Yearning with morbid fancy once again
To see the kind face of the minstrel boy
He met beside the well. At set of sun
He reached the place; the reaping-folk were gone,
The day's toil over, yet he took his seat.
A milking-girl with laden buckets full,
Came slowly from the pasture, paused and drank.
From a near cottage ran a ragged boy,
And filled his wooden pail, and to his home
Returned across the fields. A herdsman came,
And drank and gave his dog to drink, and passed,
Greeting the holy man who sat there still,
Awaiting. But his feeble pulse beat high
When he descried at last a youthful form,
Crossing the field, a pitcher on his head,
Advancing towards the well. Yea, this was he,
The same grave eyes, and open, girlish face.
But he saw not, amidst the landscape brown,
The knight's brown figure, who, to win his ear,
Asked the lad's name. "My name is Salvator,
To serve you, sir," he carelessly replied,
With eyes and hands intent upon his jar,

Brimming and bubbling. Then he cast one glance
Upon his questioner, and left the well,
Crying with keen and sudden sympathy,
"Good Father, pardon me, I knew you not.
Ah! you have travelled overmuch: your feet
Are grimed with mud and wet, your face is changed,
Your hands are dry with fever." But the knight:
"Nay, as I look on thee, I think the Lord
Wills not that I should suffer any more."
"Then you have suffered much," sighed Salvator,
With wondering pity. "You must come with me;
My father knows of you, I told him all.
A knight and minstrel who cast by his lyre,
His health and fame, to give himself to God, —
Yours is a life indeed to be desired!
If you will lie with us this night, our home
Will verily be blessed." By kindness crushed,
Wandering in sense and words, the broken knight
Resisted naught, and let himself be led
To the boy's home. The outcast and accursed
Was welcomed now by kindly human hands;
Once more his blighted spirit was revived
By contact with refreshing innocence.
There, when the morning broke upon the world,

The humble hosts no longer knew their guest.
His fleshly weeds of sin forever doffed,
Tannhäuser lay and smiled, for in the night
The angel came who brings eternal peace.

Far into Wartburg, through all Italy,
In every town the Pope sent messengers,
Riding in furious haste ; among them, one
Who bore a branch of dry wood burst in bloom ;
The pastoral rod had borne green shoots of spring,
And leaf and blossom. God is merciful.

NOTE. — In spite of my unwillingness to imply any possible belief of mine that the preceding unrhymed narratives can enter into competition with the elaborate poems of the author of "The Earthly Paradise," yet the similarity of subjects, and the imputation of plagiarism already made in private circles, induce me to remark that "Admetus" was completed before the publication of the "Love of Alcestis," and "Tannhäuser" before the "Hill of Venus."

EMMA LAZARUS.

LINKS.

THE little and the great are joined in one
By God's great force. The wondrous golden sun
Is linked unto the glow-worm's tiny spark;
The eagle soars to heaven in his flight;
And in those realms of space, all bathed in light,
Soar none except the eagle and the lark.

MATINS.

GRAY earth, gray mist, gray sky:
Through vapors hurrying by,
Larger than wont, on high
Floats the horned, yellow moon.
Chill airs are faintly stirred,
And far away is heard,
Of some fresh-awakened bird,
The querulous, shrill tune.

The dark mist hides the face
Of the dim land: no trace
Of rock or river's place
In the thick air is drawn;
But dripping grass smells sweet,
And rustling branches meet,
And sounding waters greet
The slow, sure, sacred dawn.

Past is the long black night,
With its keen lightnings white,
Thunder and floods: new light
  The glimmering low east streaks.
The dense clouds part: between
Their jagged rents are seen
Pale reaches blue and green,
  As the mirk curtain breaks.

Above the shadowy world,
Still more and more unfurled,
The gathered mists upcurled
  Like phantoms melt and pass.
In clear-obscure revealed,
Brown wood, gray stream, dark field:
Fresh, healthy odors yield
  Wet furrows, flowers, and grass.

The sudden, splendid gleam
Of one thin, golden beam
Shoots from the feathered rim
  Of yon hill crowned with woods.
Down its embowered side,
As living waters slide,
So the great morning tide
  Follows in sunny floods.

From bush and hedge and tree
Joy, unrestrained and free,
Breaks forth in melody,
  Twitter and chirp and song:

Alive the festal air
With gauze-winged creatures fair,
That flicker everywhere,
  Dart, poise, and flash along.

The shining mists are gone,
Slight films of gold swift-blown
Before the strong, bright sun
  Or the deep-colored sky:
A world of life and glow
Sparkles and basks below,
Where the soft meads a-row,
  Hoary with dew-fall, lie.

Does not the morn break thus,
Swift, bright, victorious,
With new skies cleared for us,
  Over the soul storm-tost?
Her night was long and deep,
Strange visions vexed her sleep,
Strange sorrows bade her weep:
  Her faith in dawn was lost.

No halt, no rest for her,
The immortal wanderer
From sphere to higher sphere,
  Toward the pure source of day.
The new light shames her fears,
Her faithlessness, her tears,
As the new sun appears
  To light her godlike way.

SAINT ROMUALDO.

I GIVE God thanks that I, a lean old man,
Wrinkled, infirm, and crippled with keen pains
By austere penance and continuous toil,
Now rest in spirit, and possess "the peace
Which passeth understanding." Th' end draws nigh,
Though the beginning is as yesterday,
And a broad lifetime spreads 'twixt this and that —
A favored life, though outwardly the butt
Of ignominy, malice, and affront,
Yet lighted from within by the clear star
Of a high aim, and graciously prolonged
To see at last its utmost goal attained.
I speak not of mine Order and my House,
Here founded by my hands and filled with saints —
A white society of snowy souls,
Swayed by my voice, by mine example led;
For this is but the natural harvest reaped
From labors such as mine when blessed by God.
Though I rejoice to think my spirit still
Will work my purposes, through worthy hands,
After my bones are shriveled into dust,
Yet have I gleaned a finer, sweeter fruit
Of holy satisfaction, sure and real,
Though subtler than the tissue of the air —

The power completely to detach the soul
From her companion through this life, the flesh;
So that in blessed privacy of peace,
Communing with high angels, she can hold,
Serenely rapt, her solitary course.

Ye know, O saints of heaven, what I have borne
Of discipline and scourge; the twisted lash
Of knotted rope that striped my shrinking limbs;
Vigils and fasts protracted, till my flesh
Wasted and crumbled from mine aching bones,
And the last skin, one woof of pain and sores,
Thereto like yellow parchment loosely clung;
Exposure to the fever and the frost,
When 'mongst the hollows of the hills I lurked
From persecution of misguided folk,
Accustoming my spirit to ignore
The burden of the cross, while picturing
The bliss of disembodied souls, the grace
Of holiness, the lives of sainted men,
And entertaining all exalted thoughts,
That nowise touched the trouble of the hour,
Until the grief and pain seemed far less real
Than the creations of my brain inspired.
The vision, the beatitude, were true:
The agony was but an evil dream.
I speak not now as one who hath not learned
The purport of those lightly-bandied words,
Evil and Fate, but rather one who knows

The thunders of the terrors of the world.
No mortal chance or change, no earthly shock,
Can move or reach my soul, securely throned
On heights of contemplation and calm prayer,
Happy, serene, no less with actual joy
Of present peace than faith in joys to come.

This soft, sweet, yellow evening, how the trees
Stand crisp against the clear, bright-colored sky!
How the white mountain-tops distinctly shine,
Taking and giving radiance, and the slopes
Are purpled with rich floods of peach-hued light!
Thank God, my filmy, old dislustred eyes
Find the same sense of exquisite delight,
My heart vibrates to the same touch of joy
In scenes like this, as when my pulse danced high,
And youth coursed through my veins! This the one link
That binds the wan old man that now I am
To the wild lad who followed up the hounds
Among Ravenna's pine-woods by the sea.
For there how oft would I lose all delight
In the pursuit, the triumph, or the game,
To stray alone among the shadowy glades,
And gaze, as one who is not satisfied
With gazing, at the large, bright, breathing sea,
The forest glooms, and shifting gleams between
The fine dark fringes of the fadeless trees,
On gold-green turf, sweet-brier, and wild pink rose!

How rich that buoyant air with changing scent
Of pungent pine, fresh flowers, and salt cool seas!
And when all echoes of the chase had died,
Of horn and halloo, bells and baying hounds,
How mine ears drank the ripple of the tide
On that fair shore, the chirp of unseen birds,
The rustling of the tangled undergrowth,
And the deep lyric murmur of the pines,
When through their high tops swept the sudden breeze!
There was my world, there would my heart dilate,
And my aspiring soul dissolve in prayer
Unto that Spirit of Love whose energies
Were active round me, yet whose presence, sphered
In the unsearchable, unbodied air,
Made itself felt, but reigned invisible.
This ere the day that from my past divides
My present, and that made me what I am.
Still can I see the hot, bright sky, the sea
Illimitably sparkling, as they showed
That morning. Though I deemed I took no note
Of heaven or earth or waters, yet my mind
Retains to-day the vivid portraiture
Of every line and feature of the scene.
Light-hearted 'midst the dewy lanes I fared
Unto the sea, whose jocund gleam I caught

Between the slim boles, when I heard the clink
Of naked weapons, then a sudden thrust
Sickening to hear, and then a stifled groan;
And pressing forward I beheld the sight
That seared itself for ever on my brain —
My kinsman, Ser Ranieri, on the turf,
Fallen upon his side, his bright young head
Among the pine-spurs, and his cheek pressed close
Unto the moist, chill sod: his fingers clutched
A handful of loose weeds and grass and earth,
Uprooted in his anguish as he fell,
And slowly from his heart the thick stream flowed,
Fouling the green, leaving the fair, sweet face
Ghastly, transparent, with blue, stony eyes
Staring in blankness on that other one
Who triumphed over him. With hot desire
Of instant vengeance I unsheathed my sword
To rush upon the slayer, when he turned
In his first terror of blood-guiltiness.

. . . . . .

Within my heart a something snapped and brake.
What was it but the chord of rapturous joy
For ever stilled? I tottered and would fall,
Had I not leaned against the friendly pine;
For all realities of life, unmoored
From their firm anchorage, appeared to float
Like hollow phantoms past my dizzy brain.

The strange delusion wrought upon my soul
That this had been enacted ages since.
This very horror curdled at my heart,
This net of trees spread round, these iron heavens,
Were closing over me when I had stood,
Unnumbered cycles back, and fronted *him*,
My father; and he felt mine eyes as now,
Yet saw me not; and then, as now, that form,
The one thing real, lay stretched between us both.
The fancy passed, and I stood sane and strong
To grasp the truth. Then I remembered all —
A few fierce words between them yester eve
Concerning some poor plot of pasturage,
Soon silenced into courteous, frigid calm:
This was the end. I could not meet him now,
To curse him, to accuse him, or to save,
And draw him from the red entanglement
Coiled by his own hands round his ruined life.
God pardon me! My heart that moment held
No drop of pity toward this wretched soul;
And cowering down, as though his guilt were mine,
I fled amidst the savage silences
Of that grim wood, resolved to nurse alone
My boundless desolation, shame, and grief.

There, in that thick-leaved twilight of high noon,
The quiet of the still, suspended air,

Once more my wandering thoughts were calmly ranged,
Shepherded by my will. I wept, I prayed
A solemn prayer, conceived in agony,
Blessed with response instant, miraculous ;
For in that hour my spirit was at one
With Him who knows and satisfies her needs.
The supplication and the blessing sprang
From the same source, inspired divinely both.
I prayed for light, self-knowledge, guidance, truth,
And these like heavenly manna were rained down
To feed my hungered soul. His guilt was mine.
What angel had been sent to stay mine arm
Until the fateful moment passed away
That would have ushered an eternity
Of withering remorse ? I found the germs
In mine own heart of every human sin,
That waited but occasion's tempting breath
To overgrow with poisoned bloom my life.
What God thus far had saved me from myself ?
Here was the lofty truth revealed, that each
Must feel himself in all, must know where'er
The great soul acts or suffers or enjoys,
His proper soul in kinship there is bound.
Then my life-purpose dawned upon my mind,
Encouraging as morning. As I lay,
Crushed by the weight of universal love,
Which mine own thoughts had heaped upon myself,

I heard the clear chime of a slow, sweet bell.
I knew it — whence it came and what it sang.
From the gray convent nigh the wood it pealed,
And called the monks to prayer. Vigil and prayer,
Clean lives, white days of strict austerity:
Such were the offerings of these holy saints.
How far might such not tend to expiate
A riotous world's indulgence? Here my life,
Doubly austere and doubly sanctified,
Might even for that other one atone,
So bound to mine, till both should be forgiven.

They sheltered me, not questioning the need
That led me to their cloistered solitude.
How rich, how freighted with pure influence,
With dear security of perfect peace,
Was the first day I passed within those walls!
The holy habit of perpetual prayer,
The gentle greetings, the rare temperate speech,
The chastening discipline, the atmosphere
Of settled and profound tranquillity,
Were even as living waters unto one
Who perisheth of thirst. Was this the world
That yesterday seemed one huge battlefield
For brutish passions? Could the soul of man
Withdraw so easily, and erect apart
Her own fair temple for her own high ends?
But this serene contentment slowly waned
As I discerned the broad disparity

Betwixt the form and spirit of the laws
That bound the order in strait brotherhood.
Yet when I sought to gain a larger love,
More rigid discipline, severer truth,
And more complete surrender of the soul
Unto her God, this was to my reproach,
And scoffs and gibes beset me on all sides.
In mine own cell I mortified my flesh,
I held aloof from all my brethren's feasts
To wrestle with my viewless enemies,
Till they should leave their blessing on my head;
For nightly was I haunted by that face,
White, bloodless, as I saw it 'midst the ferns,
Now staring out of darkness, and it held
Mine eyes from slumber and my brain from rest
And drove me from my straw to weep and pray.
Rebellious thoughts such subtle torture wrought
Upon my spirit that I lay day-long
In dumb despair, until the blessed hope
Of mercy dawned again upon my soul,
As gradual as the slow gold moon that mounts
The airy steps of heaven. My faith arose
With sure perception that disaster, wrong,
And every shadow of man's destiny
Are merely circumstance, and cannot touch
The soul's fine essence: they exist or die
Only as she affirms them or denies.

This faith sustains me even to the end:
It floods my heart with peace as surely now

As on that day the friars drove me forth,
Urging that my asceticism, too harsh,
Endured through pride, would bring into reproach
Their customs and their order. Then began
My exile in the mountains, where I bode
A hunted man. The elements conspired
Against me, and I was the seasons' sport,
Drenched, parched, and scorched and frozen alternately,
Burned with shrewd frosts, prostrated by fierce heats,
Shivering 'neath chilling dews and gusty rains,
And buffeted by all the winds of heaven.
Yet was this period my time of joy:
My daily thoughts perpetual converse held
With angels ministrant; mine ears were charmed
With sweet accordance of celestial sounds,
Song, harp and choir, clear ringing through the air.
And visions were revealed unto mine eyes
By night and day of Heaven's very courts,
In shadowless, undimmed magnificence.
I gave God thanks, not that He sheltered me,
And fed me as He feeds the fowls of air —
For had I perished, this too had been well —
But for the revelation of His truth,
The glory, the beatitude vouchsafed
To exalt, to heal, to quicken, to inspire;
So that the pinched, lean excommunicate

Was crowned with joy more solid, more secure,
Than all the comfort of the vales could bring.
Then the good Lord touched certain fervid hearts,
Aspiring toward His love, to come to me,
Timid and few at first; but as they heard
From mine own lips the precious oracles,
That soothed the trouble of their souls, appeased
Their spiritual hunger, and disclosed
All of the God within them to themselves,
They flocked about me, and they hailed me saint,
And sware to follow and to serve the good
Which my word published and my life declared.
Thus the lone hermit of the mountain-top
Descended leader of a band of saints,
And midway 'twixt the summit and the vale
I perched my convent. Yet I bated not
One whit of strict restraint and abstinence.
And they who love me and who serve the truth
Have learned to suffer with me, and have won
The supreme joy that is not of the flesh,
Foretasting the delights of Paradise.
This faith, to them imparted, will endure
After my tongue hath ceased to utter it,
And the great peace hath settled on my soul.

AFTERNOON.

Small, shapeless drifts of cloud
Sail slowly northward in the soft-hued sky,
With blue half-tints and rolling summits bright,
By the late sun caressed; slight hazes shroud
All things afar; shineth each leaf anigh
With its own warmth and light.

O'erblown by Southland airs,
The summer landscape basks in utter peace:
In lazy streams the lazy clouds are seen;
Low hills, broad meadows, and large, clear-cut squares
Of ripening corn-fields, rippled by the breeze,
With shifting shade and sheen.

Hark! and you may not hear
A sound less soothing than the rustle cool
Of swaying leaves, the steady wiry drone
Of unseen crickets, sudden chirpings clear
Of happy birds, the tinkle of the pool,
Chafed by a single stone.

What vague, delicious dreams,
Born of this golden hour of afternoon,
And air balm-freighted, fill the soul with bliss,
Transpierced like yonder clouds with lustrous gleams,

Fantastic, brief as they, and, like them, spun
Of gilded nothingness!

All things are well with her.
'T is good to be alive, to see the light
That plays upon the grass, to feel (and sigh
With perfect pleasure) the mild breezes stir
Among the garden roses, red and white,
With whiffs of fragrancy.

There is no troublous thought,
No painful memory, no grave regret,
To mar the sweet suggestions of the hour:
The soul, at peace, reflects the peace without,
Forgetting grief as sunset skies forget
The morning's transient shower.

PHANTASIES

(AFTER ROBERT SCHUMANN).

I. EVENING.

REST, beauty, stillness: not a waif of cloud
From gray-blue east sheer to the yellow west —
No film of mist the utmost slopes to shroud.

The earth lies grave, by quiet airs caressed,
And shepherdeth her shadows, but each stream,
Free to the sky, is by that glow possessed,

And traileth with the splendors of a dream
Athwart the dusky land. Uplift thine eyes!
Unbroken by a vapor or a gleam,

The vast clear reach of mild, wan twilight skies.
But look again, and lo, the evening star!
Against the pale tints black the slim elms rise,

The earth exhales sweet odors nigh and far,
And from the heavens fine influences fall.
Familiar things stand not for what they are:

What they suggest, foreshadow, or recall
The spirit is alert to apprehend,
Imparting somewhat of herself to all.

Labor and thought and care are at an end:
The soul is filled with gracious reveries,
And with her mood soft sounds and colors blend;

For simplest sounds ring forth like melodies
In this weird-lighted air — the monotone
Of some far bell, the distant farmyard cries,

A barking dog, the thin, persistent drone
Of crickets, and the lessening call of birds.
The apparition of yon star alone

Breaks on the sense like music. Beyond words
The peace that floods the soul, for night is here,
And Beauty still is guide and harbinger.

II. ASPIRATION.

Dark lies the earth, and bright with worlds the sky:
That soft, large, lustrous star, that first outshone,
Still holds us spelled with potent sorcery.

Dilating, shrinking, lightening, it hath won
Our spirit with its strange strong influence,
And sways it as the tides beneath the moon.

What impulse this, o'ermastering heart and sense?
Exalted, thrilled, the freed soul fain would soar
Unto that point of shining prominence,

Craving new fields and some unheard-of shore,
Yea, all the heavens, for her activity,
To mount with daring flight, to hover o'er

Low hills of earth, flat meadows, level sea,
And earthly joy and trouble. In this hour
Of waning light and sound, of mystery,

Of shadowed love and beauty-veilèd power,
She feels her wings: she yearns to grasp her own,
Knowing the utmost good to be her dower.

A dream! a dream! for at a touch 't is gone.
O mocking spirit! thy mere fools are we,
Unto the depths from heights celestial thrown.

From these blind gropings toward reality,
This thirst for truth, this most pathetic need
Of something to uplift, to justify,

To help and comfort while we faint and bleed,
May we not draw, wrung from the last despair,
Some argument of hope, some blessed creed,

That we can trust the faith which whispers prayer,
The vanishings, the ecstasy, the gleam,
The nameless aspiration, and the dream?

III. WHEREFORE?

Deep languor overcometh mind and frame:
A listless, drowsy, utter weariness,
A trance wherein no thought finds speech or name,

The overstrainéd spirit doth possess.
She sinks with drooping wing — poor unfledged bird,
That fain had flown! — in fluttering breathlessness.

To what end those high hopes that wildly stirred
The beating heart with aspirations vain?
Why proffer prayers unanswered and unheard

To blank, deaf heavens that will not heed her pain?
Where lead these lofty, soaring tendencies,
That leap and fly and poise, to fall again,

Yet seem to link her with the utmost skies?
What mean these clinging loves that bind to earth,
And claim her with beseeching, wistful eyes?

This little resting-place 'twixt death and birth,
Why is it fretted with the ceaseless flow
Of flood and ebb, with overgrowth and dearth,

And vext with dreams, and clouded with strange woe?
Ah! she is tired of thought, she yearns for peace,
Seeing all things one equal end must know.

Wherefore this tangle of perplexities,
The trouble or the joy? the weary maze
Of narrow fears and hopes that may not cease?

A chill falls on her from the skyey ways,
Black with the night-tide, where is none to hear
The ancient cry, the Wherefore of our days.

IV. FANCIES.

The ceaseless whirr of crickets fills the ear
From underneath each hedge and bush and tree,
Deep in the dew-drenched grasses everywhere.

The simple sound dispels the fantasy
Of gloom and terror gathering round the mind.
It seems a pleasant thing to breathe, to be,

To hear the many-voiced, soft summer wind
Lisp through the dark thick leafage overhead —
To see the rosy half-moon soar behind

The black slim-branching elms. Sad thoughts have fled,
Trouble and doubt, and now strange reveries
And odd caprices fill us in their stead.

From yonder broken disk the redness dies,
Like gold fruit through the leaves the half-sphere gleams,
Then over the hoar tree-tops climbs the skies,

Blanched ever more and more, until it beams
Whiter than crystal. Like a scroll unfurled,
And shadowy as a landscape seen in dreams,

Reveals itself the sleeping, quiet world,
Painted in tender grays and whites subdued —
The speckled stream with flakes of light im-
pearled,

The wide, soft meadow and the massive wood.
Naught is too wild for our credulity
In this weird hour: our finest dreams hold good.

Quaint elves and frolic flower-sprites we see,
And fairies weaving rings of gossamer,
And angels floating through the filmy air.

V. IN THE NIGHT.

Let us go in: the air is dank and chill
With dewy midnight, and the moon rides high
O'er ghostly fields, pale stream, and spectral hill.

This hour the dawn seems farthest from the
sky
So weary long the space that lies between
That sacred joy and this dark mystery

Of earth and heaven: no glimmering is seen,
In the star-sprinkled east, of coming day,
Nor, westward, of the splendor that hath been.

Strange fears beset us, nameless terrors sway
The brooding soul, that hungers for her rest,
Outworn with changing moods, vain hopes' delay,

With conscious thought o'erburdened and oppressed.
The mystery and the shadow wax too deep;
She longs to merge both sense and thought in sleep.

VI. FAERIE.

From the oped lattice glance once more abroad
While the ethereal moontide bathes with light
Hill, stream, and garden, and white-winding road.

All gracious myths born of the shadowy night
Recur, and hover in fantastic guise,
Airy and vague, before the drowsy sight.

On yonder soft gray hill Endymion lies
In rosy slumber, and the moonlit air
Breathes kisses on his cheeks and lips and eyes.

'Twixt bush and bush gleam flower-white limbs, left bare,
Of huntress-nymphs, and flying raiment thin,
Vanishing faces, and bright floating hair.

The quaint midsummer fairies and their kin,
Gnomes, elves, and trolls, on blossom, branch, and grass
Gambol and dance, and winding out and in

Leave circles of spun dew where'er they pass.
Through the blue ether the freed Ariel flies;
Enchantment holds the air; a swarming mass

Of myriad dusky, gold-winged dreams arise,
Throng toward the gates of sense, and so possess
The soul, and lull it to forgetfulness.

VII. CONFUSED DREAMS.

O strange, dim other-world revealed to us,
Beginning there where ends reality,
Lying 'twixt life and death, and populous

With souls from either sphere! now enter we
Thy twisted paths. Barred is the silver gate,
But the wild-carven doors of ivory

Spring noiselessly apart: between them straight
Flies forth a cloud of nameless shadowy things,
With harpies, imps, and monsters, small and great,

Blurring the thick air with their darkening wings.
All humors of the blood and brain take shape,
And fright us with our own imaginings.

A trouble weighs upon us: no escape
From this unnatural region can there be.
Fixed eyes stare on us, wide mouths grin and gape,

Familiar faces out of reach we see.
Fain would we scream, to shatter with a cry
The tangled woof of hideous fantasy,

When, lo! the air grows clear, a soft fair sky
Shines overhead: sharp pain dissolves in peace;
Beneath the silver archway quietly

We float away: all troublous visions cease.
By a strange sense of joy we are possessed,
Body and spirit soothed in perfect rest.

VIII. THE END OF THE SONG.

What dainty note of long-drawn melody
Athwart our dreamless sleep rings sweet and clear,
Till all the fumes of slumber are brushed by,

And with awakened consciousness we hear
The pipe of birds? Look forth! The sane, white day
Blesses the hilltops, and the sun is near.

All misty phantoms slowly roll away
With the night's vapors toward the western sky.
The Real enchants us, the fresh breath of hay

Blows toward us; soft the meadow-grasses lie,
Bearded with dew; the air is a caress;
The sudden sun o'ertops the boundary

Of eastern hills, the morning joyousness
Thrills tingling through the frame; life's pulse beats strong;
Night's fancies melt like dew. So ends the song!

ON THE PROPOSAL TO ERECT A MONUMENT IN ENGLAND TO LORD BYRON.

The grass of fifty Aprils hath waved green
Above the spent heart, the Olympian head,
The hands crost idly, the shut eyes unseen,
Unseeing, the locked lips whose song hath fled;
Yet mystic-lived, like some rich, tropic flower,
His fame puts forth fresh blossoms hour by hour;
Wide spread the laden branches dropping dew
On the low, laureled brow misunderstood,
That bent not, neither bowed, until subdued
By the last foe who crowned while he o'erthrew.

Fair was the Easter Sabbath morn when first
Men heard he had not wakened to its light:
The end had come, and time had done its worst,
For the black cloud had fallen of endless night.
Then in the town, as Greek accosted Greek,
'T was not the wonted festal words to speak,
"Christ is arisen," but "Our chief is gone,"
With such wan aspect and grief-smitten head
As when the awful cry of "Pan is dead!"
Filled echoing hill and valley with its moan.

"I am more fit for death than the world deems,"
So spake he as life's light was growing dim,
And turned to sleep as unto soothing dreams.
What terrors could its darkness hold for him,
Familiar with all anguish, but with fear
Still unacquainted? On his martial bier
They laid a sword, a helmet, and a crown —
Meed of the warrior, but not these among
His voiceless lyre, whose silent chords unstrung
Shall wait — how long? — for touches like his own.

An alien country mourned him as her son,
And hailed him hero: his sole, fitting tomb
Were Theseus' temple or the Parthenon,
Fondly she deemed. His brethren bare him home,
Their exiled glory, past the guarded gate
Where England's Abbey shelters England's great.
Afar he rests whose very name hath shed
New lustre on her with the song he sings.
So Shakespeare rests who scorned to lie with kings,
Sleeping at peace midst the unhonored dead.

And fifty years suffice to overgrow
With gentle memories the foul weeds of hate
That shamed his grave. The world begins to know

Her loss, and view with other eyes his fate.
Even as the cunning workman brings to pass
The sculptor's thought from out the unwieldy mass
Of shapeless marble, so Time lops away
The stony crust of falsehood that concealed
His just proportions, and, at last revealed,
The statue issues to the light of day,

Most beautiful, most human. Let them fling
The first stone who are tempted even as he,
And have not swerved. When did that rare soul sing
The victim's shame, the tyrant's eulogy,
The great belittle, or exalt the small,
Or grudge his gift, his blood, to disenthrall
The slaves of tyranny or ignorance?
Stung by fierce tongues himself, whose rightful fame
Hath he reviled? Upon what noble name
Did the winged arrows of that barbed wit glance?

The years' thick, clinging curtains backward pull,
And show him as he is, crowned with bright beams,
"*Beauteous, and yet not all as beautiful*
As he hath been or might be; Sorrow seems
Half of his immortality."[1] He needs
No monument whose name and song and deeds

[1] *Cain*, Act I. Scene 1.

Are graven in all foreign hearts; but she
His mother, England, slow and last to wake,
Needs raise the votive shaft for her fame's sake:
Hers is the shame if such forgotten be!

May, 1875.

ARABESQUE.

On a background of pale gold
I would trace with quaint design,
Penciled fine,
Brilliant-colored, Moorish scenes,
Mosques and crescents, pages, queens,
Line on line,
That the prose-world of to-day
Might the gorgeous Past's array
Once behold.

On the magic painted shield
Rich Granada's *Vega* green
Should be seen;
Crystal fountains, coolness flinging,
Hanging gardens' skyward springing
Emerald sheen;
Ruddy when the daylight falls,
Crowned Alhambra's beetling walls
Stand revealed;

Balconies that overbrow
Field and city, vale and stream.
In a dream
Lulled the drowsy landscape basks;
Weary toilers cease their tasks.
Mark the gleam
Silvery of each white-swathed peak!
Mountain-airs caress the cheek,
Fresh from snow.

Here in Lindaraxa's bower
The immortal roses bloom;
In the room
Lion-guarded, marble-paven,
Still the fountain leaps to heaven.
But the doom
Of the banned and stricken race
Overshadows every place,
Every hour.

Where fair Lindaraxa dwelt
Flits the bat on velvet wings;
Mute the strings
Of the broken mandoline;
The Pavilion of the Queen
Widely flings
Vacant windows to the night;
Moonbeams kiss the floor with light
Where she knelt.

Through these halls that people stepped
Who through darkling centuries
Held the keys
Of all wisdom, truth, and art,
In a Paradise apart,
Lapped in ease,
Sagely pondering deathless themes,
While, befooled with monkish dreams,
Europe slept.

Where shall they be found to-day?
Yonder hill that frets the sky
"The Last Sigh
Of the Moor" is namèd still.
There the ill-starred Boabdil
Bade good-by
To Granada and to Spain,
Where the Crescent ne'er again
Holdeth sway.

Vanished like the wind that blows,
Whither shall we seek their trace
On earth's face?
The gigantic wheel of fate,
Crushing all things soon or late,
Now a race,
Now a single life o'erruns,
Now a universe of suns,
Now a rose.

AGAMEMNON'S TOMB.

Uplift the ponderous, golden mask of death,
And let the sun shine on him as it did
How many thousand years agone! Beneath
This worm-defying, uncorrupted lid,
Behold the young, heroic face, round-eyed,
Of one who in his full-flowered manhood died;
Of nobler frame than creatures of to-day,
Swathed in fine linen cerecloths fold on fold,
With carven weapons wrought of bronze and gold,
Accoutred like a warrior for the fray.

We gaze in awe at these huge-modeled limbs,
Shrunk in death's narrow house, but hinting yet
Their ancient majesty; these sightless rims
Whose living eyes the eyes of Helen met;
The speechless lips that ah! what tales might tell
Of the earth's morning-tide when gods did dwell
Amidst a generous-fashioned, god-like race,
Who dwarf our puny semblance, and who won
The secret soul of Beauty for their own,
While all our art but crudely apes their grace.

We gather all the precious relics up,
The golden buttons chased with wondrous craft,

The sculptured trinkets and the crystal cup,
The sheathed, bronze sword, the knife with brazen haft.
Fain would we wrest with curious eyes from these
Unnumbered long-forgotten histories,
The deeds heroic of this mighty man,
On whom once more the living daylight beams,
To shame our littleness, to mock our dreams,
And the abyss of centuries to span.

Yet could we rouse him from his blind repose,
How might we meet his searching questionings,
Concerning all the follies, wrongs, and woes,
Since his great day whom men call King of Kings,
Victorious Agamemnon? How might we
Those large, clear eyes confront, which scornfully
Would view us as a poor, degenerate race,
Base-souled and mean-proportioned? What reply
Give to the beauty-loving Greek's heart-cry,
Seeking his ancient gods in vacant space?

What should he find within a world grown cold,
Save doubt and trouble? To his sunny creed
A thousand gloomy, warring sects succeed.
How of the Prince of Peace might he be told,

When over half the world the war-cloud lowers?
How would he mock these faltering hopes of ours,
Who knows the secret now of death and fate!
Humbly we gaze on the colossal frame,
And mutely we accept the mortal shame,
Of men degraded from a high estate.

SIC SEMPER LIBERATORIBUS!

MARCH 13, 1881.

As one who feels the breathless nightmare grip
His heart-strings, and through visioned horrors fares,
Now on a thin-ledged chasm's rock-crumbling lip,
Now on a tottering pinnacle that dares
The front of heaven, while always unawares
Weird monsters start above, around, beneath,
Each glaring from some uglier mask of death,

So the White Czar imperial progress made
Through terror-haunted days. A shock, a cry
Whose echoes ring the globe — the spectre's laid.
Hurled o'er the abyss, see the crowned martyr lie
Resting in peace — fear, change, and death gone by.

Fit end for nightmare — mist of blood and tears,
Red climax to the slow, abortive years.

The world draws breath — one long, deep-shuddering sigh,
At that which dullest brain prefigured clear
As swift-sure bolt from thunder-threatening sky.
How heaven-anointed humblest lots appear
Beside his glittering eminence of fear;
His spiked crown, sackcloth purple, poisoned cates,
His golden palace honey-combed with hates.

Well, it is done! A most heroic plan,
Which after myriad plots succeeds at last
In robbing of his life one poor old man,
Whose sole offense — his birthright — has but passed
To fresher blood, with younger strength recast.
What men are these, who, clamoring to be free,
Would bestialize the world to what they be?

Whose sons are they who made that snow-wreathed head
Their frenzy's target? In their Russian veins,
What alien current urged on to smite him dead
Whose word had loosed a million Russian chains?
What brutes were they for whom such speechless pains,

So royally endured, no human thrill
Awoke, in hearts drunk with the lust to kill?

Not brutes! No tiger of the wilderness,
No jackal of the jungle, bears such brand
As man's black heart, who shrinks not to confess
The desperate deed of his deliberate hand.
Our kind, our kin, have done this thing. We stand
Bowed earthward, red with shame, to see such wrong
Prorogue Love's cause and Truth's — God knows how long!

DON RAFAEL.

"I WOULD not have," he said,
"Tears, nor the black pall, nor the wormy grave,
Grief's hideous panoply I would not have
Round me when I am dead.

"Music and flowers and light,
And choric dances to guitar and flute,
Be these around me when my lips are mute,
Mine eyes are sealed from sight.

"So let me lie one day,
One long, eternal day, in sunshine bathed,
In cerements of silken tissue swathed,
Smothered 'neath flowers of May.

"One perfect day of peace,
Or ere clean flame consume my fleshly veil,
My life — a gilded vapor — shall exhale,
Brief as a sigh — and cease.

"But ere the torch be laid
To my unshrinking limbs by some true hand,
Athwart the orange-fragrant laughing land,
Bring many a dark-eyed maid

"From the bright, sea-kissed town;
My beautiful, beloved enemies,
Gemmed as the dew, voluptuous as the breeze,
Each in her festal gown.

"All those through whom I learned
The sweets of folly and the pains of love,
My Rose, my Star, my Comforter, my Dove,
For whom, poor moth, I burned.

"Loves of a day, an hour,
Or passions (vowed eternal) of a year,
Though each be strange to each, to me all dear
As to the bee the flower.

"Around me they shall move
In languid contra dances, and shall shed
Their smiling eyebeams as I were not dead,
But quick to flash back love.

"Something not alien quite
To tender ruth, perchance their breast shall fill,
Seeing him that was so mobile grown so still,
The fiery-veined so white.

"And when the dance is o'er,
The pinched guitar, the smitten tambourine,
Have ceased their rhythmic beat, — oh, friends of mine,
On my rich bier, then pour

"The garlands that ye wear,
The happy rose that on your bosom breathes,
The fresh-culled clusters and the dewy wreaths
That crown your fragrant hair.

"Though blind, I still shall see,
Though dead, shall feel your presence and shall know,
I who was beauty's life-long slave, shall so
Win her in death to me.

"Thanks, sisters, and farewell!
Back to your joys. My brother shall make room
For my tried sword upon the high-piled bloom,
And fire the pinnacle.

"My soul, pure flame, shall leap
To meet its parent essence once again.

My body dust and ashes shall remain,
Tired heart and brain shall sleep.

"Life has one gate alone,
Obscure, beset with peril and fierce pain.
Large death has many portals to his fane,
Why choose we to make moan?

"Why dwell with worms and clay
When we may soar through air on wings of flame,
Dissolve to small, white dust our perfect frame,
And never know decay?

"A brother's pious hand
The pure, fire-winnowed ashes shall inurn,
And lay them in the orange grove where burn
Globed suns that scent the land.

"The leaf shall be more green,
Even for my dust — more snowy-soft the flower,
More juicy-sweet the fruit's live pulp — the bower
Richer that I have been.

"For I would not," he said,
"Tears and the black pall and the wormy grave,
Grief's hideous panoply I would not have
Round me when I am dead."

OFF ROUGH POINT.

We sat at twilight nigh the sea,
The fog hung gray and weird.
Through the thick film uncannily
The broken moon appeared.

We heard the billows crack and plunge,
We saw nor waves nor ships.
Earth sucked the vapors like a sponge,
The salt spray wet our lips.

Closer the woof of white mist drew,
Before, behind, beside.
How could that phantom moon break through,
Above that shrouded tide?

The roaring waters filled the ear,
A white blank foiled the sight.
Close-gathering shadows near, more near,
Brought the blind, awful night.

O friends who passed unseen, unknown!
O dashing, troubled sea!
Still stand we on a rock alone,
Walled round by mystery.

MATER AMABILIS.

Down the goldenest of streams,
Tide of dreams,
The fair cradled man-child drifts;
Sways with cadenced motion slow,
To and fro,
As the mother-foot poised lightly, falls and lifts.

He, the firstling, — he, the light
Of her sight, —
He, the breathing pledge of love,
'Neath the holy passion lies,
Of her eyes, —
Smiles to feel the warm, life-giving ray above.

She believes that in his vision,
Skies elysian
O'er an angel-people shine.
Back to gardens of delight,
Taking flight,
His auroral spirit basks in dreams divine.

But she smiles through anxious tears;
Unborn years
Pressing forward, she perceives.
Shadowy muffled shapes, they come
Deaf and dumb,
Bringing what? dry chaff and tares, or full-eared sheaves?

What for him shall she invoke?
Shall the oak
Bind the man's triumphant brow?
Shall his daring foot alight
On the height?
Shall he dwell amidst the humble and the low?

Through what tears and sweat and pain,
Must he gain
Fruitage from the tree of life?
Shall it yield him bitter flavor?
Shall its savor
Be as manna midst the turmoil and the strife?

In his cradle slept and smiled
Thus the child
Who as Prince of Peace was hailed.
Thus anigh the mother breast,
Lulled to rest,
Child-Napoleon down the lilied river sailed.

Crowned or crucified — the same
Glows the flame
Of her deathless love divine.
Still the blessed mother stands,
In all lands,
As she watched beside thy cradle and by mine.

Whatso gifts the years bestow,
Still men know,

While she breathes, lives one who sees
(Stand they pure or sin-defiled)
But the child
Whom she crooned to sleep and rocked upon her knees.

FOG.

Light silken curtain, colorless and soft,
Dreamlike before me floating! what abides
Behind thy pearly veil's
Opaque, mysterious woof?

Where sleek red kine, and dappled, crunch day-long
Thick, luscious blades and purple clover-heads,
Nigh me I still can mark
Cool fields of beaded grass.

No more; for on the rim of the globed world
I seem to stand and stare at nothingness.
But songs of unseen birds
And tranquil roll of waves

Bring sweet assurance of continuous life
Beyond this silvery cloud. Fantastic dreams,
Of tissue subtler still
Than the wreathed fog, arise,

And cheat my brain with airy vanishings
And mystic glories of the world beyond.
A whole enchanted town
Thy baffling folds conceal —

An Orient town, with slender-steepled mosques,
Turret from turret springing, dome from dome,
Fretted with burning stones,
And trellised with red gold.

Through spacious streets, where running waters flow,
Sun-screened by fruit-trees and the broad-leaved palm,
Past the gay-decked bazaars,
Walk turbaned, dark-eyed men.

Hark! you can hear the many murmuring tongues,
While loud the merchants vaunt their gorgeous wares.
The sultry air is spiced
With fragrance of rich gums,

And through the lattice high in yon dead wall,
See where, unveiled, an arch, young, dimpled face,
Flushed like a musky peach,
Peers down upon the mart!

From her dark, ringleted and bird-poised head
She hath cast back the milk-white silken veil:
'Midst the blank blackness there
She blossoms like a rose.

Beckons she not with those bright, full-orbed eyes,
And open arms that like twin moonbeams gleam?
Behold her smile on me
With honeyed, scarlet lips!

Divine Scheherazade! I am thine.
I come! I come! — Hark! from some far-off mosque
The shrill muezzin calls
The hour of silent prayer,

And from the lattice he hath scared my love.
The lattice vanisheth itself — the street,
The mart, the Orient town;
Only through still, soft air

That cry is yet prolonged. I wake to hear
The distant fog-horn peal: before mine eyes
Stands the white wall of mist,
Blending with vaporous skies.

Elusive gossamer, impervious
Even to the mighty sun-god's keen red shafts!
With what a jealous art
Thy secret thou dost guard!

Well do I know deep in thine inmost folds,
Within an opal hollow, there abides
The lady of the mist,
The Undine of the air —

A slender, winged, ethereal, lily form,
Dove-eyed, with fair, free-floating, pearl-wreathed hair,
In waving raiment swathed
Of changing, irised hues.

Where her feet, rosy as a shell, have grazed
The freshened grass, a richer emerald glows:
Into each flower-cup
Her cool dews she distills.

She knows the tops of jagged mountain-peaks,
She knows the green soft hollows of their sides,
And unafraid she floats
O'er the vast-circled seas.

She loves to bask within the moon's wan beams,
Lying, night-long, upon the moist, dark earth,
And leave her seeded pearls
With morning on the grass.

Ah! that athwart these dim, gray outer courts
Of her fantastic palace I might pass,
And reach the inmost shrine
Of her chaste solitude,

And feel her cool and dewy fingers press
My mortal-fevered brow, while in my heart
She poured with tender love
Her healing Lethe-balm!

See! the close curtain moves, the spell dissolves!
Slowly it lifts: the dazzling sunshine streams
Upon a newborn world
And laughing summer seas.

Swift, snowy-breasted sandbirds twittering glance
Through crystal air. On the horizon's marge,
Like a huge purple wraith,
The dusky fog retreats.

THE ELIXIR.

"Oh brew me a potion strong and good!
One golden drop in his wine
Shall charm his sense and fire his blood,
And bend his will to mine."

Poor child of passion! ask of me
Elixir of death or sleep,
Or Lethe's stream; but love is free,
And woman must wait and weep.

SONG.

VENUS.

Frosty lies the winter-landscape,
In the twilight golden-green.
Down the Park's deserted alleys,
Naked elms stand stark and lean.

Dumb the murmur of the fountain,
Birds have flown from lawn and hill.
But while yonder star 's ascendant,
Love triumphal reigneth still.

See the keen flame throb and tremble,
Brightening in the darkening night,
Breathing like a thing of passion,
In the sky's smooth chrysolite.

Not beneath the moon, oh lover,
Thou shalt gain thy heart's desire.
Speak to-night! The gods are with thee
Burning with a kindred fire.

SPRING LONGING.

What art thou doing here, O Imagination? Go away, I entreat thee by the gods, as thou didst come, for I want thee not. But thou art come according to thy old fashion. I am not angry with thee — only go away. — *Marcus Antoninus.*

Lilac hazes veil the skies.
Languid sighs
Breathes the mild, caressing air.
Pink as coral's branching sprays,
Orchard ways
With the blossomed peach are fair.

Sunshine, cordial as a kiss,
Poureth bliss
In this craving soul of mine,
And my heart her flower-cup
Lifteth up,
Thirsting for the draught divine.

Swift the liquid golden flame
Through my frame
Sets my throbbing veins afire.
Bright, alluring dreams arise,
Brim mine eyes
With the tears of strong desire.

All familiar scenes anear
Disappear —

Homestead, orchard, field, and wold.
Moorish spires and turrets fair
Cleave the air,
Arabesqued on skies of gold.

Lo, my spirit, this May morn,
Outward borne,
Over seas hath taken wing:
Where the mediæval town,
Like a crown,
Wears the garland of the Spring.

Light and sound and odors sweet
Fill the street;
Gypsy girls are selling flowers.
Lean hidalgos turn aside,
Amorous-eyed,
'Neath the grim cathedral towers.

Oh, to be in Spain to-day,
Where the May
Recks no whit of good or evil,
Love and only love breathes she!
Oh, to be
'Midst the olive-rows of Seville!

Or on such a day to glide
With the tide
Of the berylline lagoon,

Through the streets that mirror heaven,
Crystal paven,
In the warm Venetian noon.

At the prow the gondolier
May not hear,
May not see our furtive kiss;
But he lends with cadenced strain
The refrain
To our ripe and silent bliss.

Golden shadows, silver light,
Burnish bright
Air and water, domes and skies;
As in some ambrosial dream,
On the stream
Floats our bark in magic wise.

Oh, to float day long just so!
Naught to know
Of the trouble, toil, and fret!
This is love, and this is May:
Yesterday
And to-morrow to forget!

Whither hast thou, Fancy free,
Guided me,
Wild Bohemian sister dear?
All thy gypsy soul is stirred
Since yon bird
Warbled that the Spring was here.

Tempt no more! I may not follow,
Like the swallow,
Gayly on the track of Spring.
Bounden by an iron fate,
I must wait,
Dream and wonder, yearn and sing.

THE SOUTH.

NIGHT, and beneath star-blazoned summer skies
Behold the Spirit of the musky South,
A creole with still-burning, languid eyes,
Voluptuous limbs and incense-breathing mouth:
Swathed in spun gauze is she,
From fibres of her own anana tree.

Within these sumptuous woods she lies at ease,
By rich night-breezes, dewy cool, caressed:
'Twixt cypresses and slim palmetto trees,
Like to the golden oriole's hanging nest,
Her airy hammock swings,
And through the dark her mocking-bird yet sings.

How beautiful she is! A tulip-wreath
Twines round her shadowy, free-floating hair:
Young, weary, passionate, and sad as death,
Dark visions haunt for her the vacant air,
While movelessly she lies
With lithe, lax, folded hands and heavy eyes.

Full well knows she how wide and fair extend
Her groves bright-flowered, her tangled everglades,
Majestic streams that indolently wend
Through lush savanna or dense forest shades,
Where the brown buzzard flies
To broad bayous 'neath hazy-golden skies.

Hers is the savage splendor of the swamp,
With pomp of scarlet and of purple bloom,
Where blow warm, furtive breezes faint and damp,
Strange insects whir, and stalking bitterns boom —
Where from stale waters dead
Oft looms the great-jawed alligator's head.

Her wealth, her beauty, and the blight on these, —
Of all she is aware: luxuriant woods,
Fresh, living, sunlit, in her dream she sees;
And ever midst those verdant solitudes
The soldier's wooden cross,
O'ergrown by creeping tendrils and rank moss.

Was hers a dream of empire? was it sin?
And is it well that all was borne in vain?
She knows no more than one who slow doth win,
After fierce fever, conscious life again,
Too tired, too weak, too sad,
By the new light to be or stirred or glad.

From rich sea-islands fringing her green shore,
From broad plantations where swart freemen bend
Bronzed backs in willing labor, from her store
Of golden fruit, from stream, from town, ascend
Life-currents of pure health:
Her aims shall be subserved with boundless wealth.

Yet now how listless and how still she lies,
Like some half-savage, dusky Indian queen,
Rocked in her hammock 'neath her native skies,
With the pathetic, passive, broken mien
Of one who, sorely proved,
Great-souled, hath suffered much and much hath loved!

But look! along the wide-branched, dewy glade
Glimmers the dawn: the light palmetto-trees
And cypresses reissue from the shade,
And *she* hath wakened. Through clear air she sees
The pledge, the brightening ray,
And leaps from dreams to hail the coming day.

SPRING STAR.

I.

Over the lamp-lit street,
Trodden by hurrying feet,
Where mostly pulse and beat
Life's throbbing veins,
See where the April star,
Blue-bright as sapphires are,
Hangs in deep heavens far,
Waxes and wanes.

Strangely alive it seems,
Darting keen, dazzling gleams,
Veiling anon its beams,
Large, clear, and pure.
In the broad western sky
No orb may shine anigh,
No lesser radiancy
May there endure.

Spring airs are blowing sweet:
Low in the dusky street
Star-beams and eye-beams meet.
Rapt in his dreams,
All through the crowded mart
Poet with swift-stirred heart,
Passing beneath, must start,
Thrilled by those gleams.

Naught doth he note anear,
Fain through Night's veil to peer,
Reach that resplendent sphere,
Reading her sign.
Where point those sharp, thin rays,
Guiding his weary maze,
Blesseth she or betrays,
Who may divine?

"Guard me, celestial light,
Lofty, serenely bright:
Lead my halt feet aright,"
Prayerful he speaks.
"For a new ray hath shone
Over my spirit lone.
Be this new soul the one
Whom my soul seeks."

II.

Beside her casement oped the maiden sits,
Where the mild evening spirit of the Spring
Gently between the city's homesteads flits
To kiss her brows, and floats on languid wing,
Vague longings in her breast awakening.
While her heart trembles 'neath those dim, deep skies,
As the quick sea that 'neath the globed moon lies.

Where her eyes rest the full-orbed evening star
Burns with white flame: it beckons, shrinks, dilates.

She, dazzled by that shining world afar,
May not withdraw her gaze: breathless she waits.
Some promised joy from Heaven's very gates
Unto her soul seems proffered. When shall be
The bright fulfilment of that star's decree?

Nor glad nor sad is she: she doth not know
That through the city's throng one threads his way,
Thrilled likewise by that planet's mystic glow,
And hastes to seek her. What sweet change shall sway
Her spirit at his coming? What new ray
Upon his shadowy life from her shall fall?
The silent star burns on, and knoweth all.

A JUNE NIGHT.

TEN O'CLOCK: the broken moon
Hangs not yet a half hour high,
Yellow as a shield of brass,
In the dewy air of June,
Poised between the vaulted sky
And the ocean's liquid glass.

Earth lies in the shadow still;
Low black bushes, trees, and lawn
Night's ambrosial dews absorb;

Through the foliage creeps a thrill,
Whispering of yon spectral dawn
And the hidden climbing orb.

Higher, higher, gathering light,
Veiling with a golden gauze
All the trembling atmosphere,
See, the rayless disk grows white!
Hark, the glittering billows pause!
Faint, far sounds possess the ear.

Elves on such a night as this
Spin their rings upon the grass;
On the beach the water-fay
Greets her lover with a kiss;
Through the air swift spirits pass,
Laugh, caress, and float away.

Shut thy lids and thou shalt see
Angel faces wreathed with light,
Mystic forms long vanished hence.
Ah, too fine, too rare, they be
For the grosser mortal sight,
And they foil our waking sense.

Yet we feel them floating near,
Know that we are not alone,
Though our open eyes behold
Nothing save the moon's bright sphere,
In the vacant heavens shown,
And the ocean's path of gold.

MAGNETISM.

By the impulse of my will,
  By the red flame in my blood,
By my nerves' electric thrill,
  By the passion of my mood,
My concentrated desire,
  My undying, desperate love,
I ignore Fate, I defy her,
  Iron-hearted Death I move.
When the town lies numb with sleep,
  Here, round-eyed I sit; my breath
Quickly stirred, my flesh a-creep,
  And I force the gates of death.
I nor move nor speak — you 'd deem
  From my quiet face and hands,
I were tranced — but in her dream,
  She responds, she understands.
I have power on what is not,
  Or on what has ceased to be,
From that deep, earth-hollowed spot,
  I can lift her up to me.
And, or ere I am aware
  Through the closed and curtained door,
Comes my lady white and fair,
  And embraces me once more.
Though the clay clings to her gown,
  Yet all heaven is in her eyes;
Cool, kind fingers press mine eyes,
  To my soul her soul replies.

But when breaks the common dawn,
And the city wakes — behold!
My shy phantom is withdrawn,
And I shiver lone and cold.
And I know when she has left,
She is stronger far than I,
And more subtly spun her weft,
Than my human wizardry.
Though I force her to my will,
By the red flame in my blood,
By my nerves' electric thrill,
By the passion of my mood,
Yet all day a ghost am I.
Nerves unstrung, spent will, dull brain.
I achieve, attain, but die,
And she claims me hers again.

AUGUST MOON.

Look! the round-cheeked moon floats high,
In the glowing August sky,
Quenching all her neighbor stars,
Save the steady flame of Mars.
White as silver shines the sea,
Far-off sails like phantoms be,
Gliding o'er that lake of light,
Vanishing in nether night.
Heavy hangs the tasseled corn,
Sighing for the cordial morn;

But the marshy-meadows bare,
Love this spectral-lighted air,
Drink the dews and lift their song,
Chirp of crickets all night long;
Earth and sea enchanted lie
'Neath that moon-usurped sky.

To the faces of our friends
Unfamiliar traits she lends —
Quaint, white witch, who looketh down
With a glamour all her own.
Hushed are laughter, jest, and speech,
Mute and heedless each of each,
In the glory wan we sit,
Visions vague before us flit;
Side by side, yet worlds apart,
Heart becometh strange to heart.

Slowly in a moved voice, then,
Ralph, the artist, spake again —
"Does not that weird orb unroll
Scenes phantasmal to your soul?
As I gaze thereon, I swear,
Peopled grows the vacant air,
Fables, myths alone are real,
White-clad sylph-like figures steal
'Twixt the bushes, o'er the lawn,
Goddess, nymph, undine, and faun.
Yonder, see the *Willis* dance,
Faces pale with stony glance;

They are maids who died unwed,
And they quit their gloomy bed,
Hungry still for human pleasure,
Here to trip a moonlit measure.
Near the shore the mermaids play,
Floating on the cool, white spray,
Leaping from the glittering surf
To the dark and fragrant turf,
Where the frolic trolls, and elves
Daintily disport themselves.
All the shapes by poet's brain,
Fashioned, live for me again,
In this spiritual light,
Less than day, yet more than night.
What a world! a waking dream,
All things other than they seem,
Borrowing a finer grace,
From yon golden globe in space;
Touched with wild, romantic glory,
Foliage fresh and billows hoary,
Hollows bathed in yellow haze,
Hills distinct and fields of maize,
Ancient legends come to mind.
Who would marvel should he find,
In the copse or nigh the spring,
Summer fairies gamboling
Where the honey-bees do suck,
Mab and Ariel and Puck?
Ah! no modern mortal sees
Creatures delicate as these.

All the simple faith has gone
Which their world was builded on.
Now the moonbeams coldly glance
On no gardens of romance;
To prosaic senses dull,
Baldur 's dead, the Beautiful,
Hark, the cry rings overhead,
'Universal Pan is dead!' "
"*Requiescant!*" Claude's grave tone
Thrilled us strangely. "I am one
Who would not restore that Past,
Beauty will immortal last,
Though the beautiful must die —
This the ages verify.
And had Pan deserved the name
Which his votaries misclaim,
He were living with us yet.
I behold, without regret,
Beauty in new forms recast,
Truth emerging from the vast,
Bright and orbed, like yonder sphere,
Making the obscure air clear.
He shall be of bards the king,
Who, in worthy verse, shall sing
All the conquests of the hour,
Stealing no fictitious power
From the classic types outworn,
But his rhythmic line adorn
With the marvels of the real.
He the baseless feud shall heal

That estrangeth wide apart
Science from her sister Art.
Hold! look through this glass for me?
Artist, tell me what you see?"
"I!" cried Ralph. "I see in place
Of Astarte's silver face,
Or veiled Isis' radiant robe,
Nothing but a rugged globe
Seamed with awful rents and scars.
And below no longer Mars,
Fierce, flame-crested god of war,
But a lurid, flickering star,
Fashioned like our mother earth,
Vexed, belike, with death and birth."

Rapt in dreamy thought the while,
With a sphinx-like shadowy smile,
Poet Florio sat, but now
Spake in deep-voiced accents slow,
More as one who probes his mind,
Than for us — "Who seeks, shall find —
Widening knowledge surely brings
Vaster themes to him who sings.
Was veiled Isis more sublime
Than yon frozen fruit of Time,
Hanging in the naked sky?
Death's domain — for worlds too die.
Lo! the heavens like a scroll
Stand revealed before my soul;
And the hieroglyphs are suns —

Changeless change the law that runs
Through the flame-inscribed page,
World on world and age on age,
Balls of ice and orbs of fire,
What abides when these expire?
Through slow cycles they revolve,
Yet at last like clouds dissolve.
Jove, Osiris, Brahma pass,
Races wither like the grass.
Must not mortals be as gods
To embrace such periods?
Yet at Nature's heart remains
One who waxes not nor wanes.
And our crowning glory still
Is to have conceived his will."

SUNRISE.

September 26, 1881.

WEEP for the martyr! Strew his bier
With the last roses of the year;
Shadow the land with sables; knell
The harsh-tongued, melancholy bell;
Beat the dull muffled drum, and flaunt
The drooping banner; let the chant
Of the deep-throated organ sob —
One voice, one sorrow, one heart-throb,
From land to land, from sea to sea —
The huge world quires his elegy.

Tears, love, and honor he shall have,
Through ages keeping green his grave.
Too late approved, too early lost,
His story is the people's boast.
Tough-sinewed offspring of the soil,
Of peasant lineage, reared to toil,
In Europe he had been a thing
To the glebe tethered — here a king!
Crowned not for some transcendent gift,
Genius of power that may lift
A Cæsar or a Bonaparte
Up to the starred goal of his heart;
But that he was the epitome
Of all the people aim to be.
Were they his dying trust? He was
No less their model and their glass.
In him the daily traits were viewed
Of the undistinguished multitude.
Brave as the silent myriads are,
Crushed by the juggernaut world-car;
Strong with the people's strength, yet mild,
Simple and tender as a child;
Wise with the wisdom of the heart,
Able in council, field, and mart;
Nor lacking in the lambent gleam,
The great soul's final stamp — the beam
Of genial fun, the humor sane
Wherewith the hero sports with pain.
His virtues hold within the span
Of his obscurest fellow-man.

To live without reproach, to die
Without a fear — in these words lie
His highest aims, for none too high.
No triumph his beyond the reach
Of patient courage, kindly speech;
And yet so brave the soul outbreathed,
The great example he bequeathed,
Were all to follow, we should see
A universal chivalry.

His trust, the People! They respond
From Maine to Florida, beyond
The sea-walled continent's broad scope,
Honor his pledge, confirm his hope.
Hark! over seas the echo hence,
The nations do him reverence.
An Empress lays her votive wreath
Where peoples weep with bated breath.
The world-clock strikes a fateful hour,
Bright with fair portents, big with power, —
The first since history's course has run,
When kings' and peoples' cause is one;
Those mourn a brother — these a son!

O how he loved them! That gray morn,
When his wound-wasted form was borne
North, from the White House to the sea,
Lifting his tired lids thankfully,
"How good," he murmured in his pain,
"To see the people once again!"

Oh, how they loved him! They stood there,
Thronging the road, the street, the square,
With hushed lips locked in silent prayer,
Uncovered heads and streaming eyes,
Breathless as when a father dies.
The records of that ghostly ride,
Past town and field at morning-tide.

When life's full stream is wont to gush
Through all its ways with boisterous rush,
— The records note that once a hound
Had barked, and once was heard the sound
Of cart-wheels rumbling on the stones —
And once, mid stifled sobs and groans,
One man dared audibly lament,
And cried, "God bless the President!"
Always the waiting crowds to send
A God-speed to his journey's end —
The anxious whisper, brow of gloom,
As in a sickness-sacred room,
Till his ear drank with ecstasy
The rhythmic thunders of the sea.

Tears for the smitten fatherless,
The wife's, the mother's life-distress,
To whom the million-throated moan
From throne and hut, may not atone
For one hushed voice, one empty chair,
One presence missing everywhere.
But only words of joy and cheer,

The people from his grave shall hear.
Were they not worthy of his trust,
From whose seed sprang the sacred dust?
He broke the bars that separate
The humble from the high estate.
And heirs of empire round his bed
Mourn with the "disinherited."

Oh, toil-worn, patient Heart that bleeds,
Whose martyrdom even his exceeds,
Wronged, cursed, despised, misunderstood —
Oh, all-enduring multitude,
Rejoice! amid your tears, rejoice!
There issues from this grave a voice,
Proclaiming your long night is o'er,
Your day-dawn breaks from shore to shore.
You have redeemed his pledge, remained
Secure, erect, and self-sustained,
Holding more dear one thing alone,
Even than the blood of dearest son,
Revering with religious awe
The inviolable might of Law.

A MASQUE OF VENICE.

(A DREAM.)

Not a stain,
In the sun-brimmed sapphire cup that is the sky —
Not a ripple on the black translucent lane
Of the palace-walled lagoon.
Not a cry
As the gondoliers with velvet oar glide by,
Through the golden afternoon.

From this height
Where the carved, age-yellowed balcony o'erjuts
Yonder liquid, marble pavement, see the light
Shimmer soft beneath the bridge
That abuts
On a labyrinth of water-ways and shuts
Half their sky off with its ridge.

We shall mark
All the pageant from this ivory porch of ours,
Masques and jesters, mimes and minstrels, while we hark
To their music as they fare.
Scent their flowers
Flung from boat to boat in rainbow radiant showers
Through the laughter-ringing air.

See! they come,
Like a flock of serpent-throated black-plumed swans,
With the mandoline, the viol, and the drum,
Gems afire on arms ungloved,
Fluttering fans,
Floating mantles like a great moth's streaky vans
Such as Veronese loved.

But behold
In their midst a white unruffled swan appear.
One strange barge that snowy tapestries enfold,
White its tasseled, silver prow.
Who is here?
Prince of Love in masquerade or Prince of Fear,
Clad in glittering silken snow?

Cheek and chin
Where the mask's edge stops are of the hoar-frost's hue,
And no eyebeams seem to sparkle from within
Where the hollow rings have place.
Yon gay crew
Seem to fly him, he seems ever to pursue.
'T is our sport to watch the race.

At his side
Stands the goldenest of beauties; from her glance,
From her forehead, shines the splendor of a bride,

And her feet seem shod with wings
To entrance,
For she leaps into a wild and rhythmic dance,
Like Salome at the King's.

'T is his aim
Just to hold, to clasp her once against his breast,
Hers to flee him, to elude him in the game.
Ah, she fears him overmuch!
Is it jest, —
Is it earnest? a strange riddle lurks half-guessed
In her horror of his touch.

For each time
That his snow-white fingers reach her, fades some ray
From the glory of her beauty in its prime;
And the knowledge grows upon us that the dance
Is no play
'Twixt the pale, mysterious lover and the fay —
But the whirl of fate and chance.

Where the tide
Of the broad lagoon sinks plumb into the sea,
There the mystic gondolier hath won his bride.
Hark, one helpless, stifled scream!
Must it be?
Mimes and minstrels, flowers and music, where are ye?
Was all Venice such a dream?

AUTUMN SADNESS.

Air and sky are swathed in gold
Fold on fold,
Light glows through the trees like wine.
Earth, sun-quickened, swoons for bliss
'Neath his kiss,
Breathless in a trance divine.

Nature pauses from her task,
Just to bask
In these lull'd transfigured hours.
The green leaf nor stays nor goes,
But it grows
Royaler than mid-June's flowers.

Such impassioned silence fills
All the hills
Burning with unflickering fire —
Such a blood-red splendor stains
The leaves' veins,
Life seems one fulfilled desire.

While earth, sea, and heavens shine,
Heart of mine,
Say, what art thou waiting for?
Shall the cup ne'er reach the lip,
But still slip
Till the life-long thirst give o'er?

Shall my soul, no frosts may tame,
Catch new flame
From the incandescent air?
In this nuptial joy apart,
Oh my heart,
Whither shall we lonely fare?

Seek some dusky, twilight spot,
Quite forgot
Of the Autumn's Bacchic fire.
Where soft mists and shadows sleep,
There outweep
Barren longing's vain desire.

SONNETS.

ECHOES.

Late-born and woman-souled I dare not hope,
The freshness of the elder lays, the might
Of manly, modern passion shall alight
Upon my Muse's lips, nor may I cope
(Who veiled and screened by womanhood must grope)
With the world's strong-armed warriors and recite
The dangers, wounds, and triumphs of the fight;
Twanging the full-stringed lyre through all its scope.
But if thou ever in some lake-floored cave
O'erbrowed by rocks, a wild voice wooed and heard,
Answering at once from heaven and earth and wave,
Lending elf-music to thy harshest word,
Misprize thou not these echoes that belong
To one in love with solitude and song.

SUCCESS.

Oft have I brooded on defeat and pain,
The pathos of the stupid, stumbling throng.
These I ignore to-day and only long
To pour my soul forth in one trumpet strain,
One clear, grief-shattering, triumphant song,
For all the victories of man's high endeavor,
Palm-bearing, laureled deeds that live forever,
The splendor clothing him whose will is strong.
Hast thou beheld the deep, glad eyes of one
Who has persisted and achieved? Rejoice!
On naught diviner shines the all-seeing sun.
Salute him with free heart and choral voice,
'Midst flippant, feeble crowds of spectres wan,
The bold, significant, successful man.

THE NEW COLOSSUS.[1]

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command

[1] Written in aid of Bartholdi Pedestal Fund, 1883.

The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

VENUS OF THE LOUVRE.

Down the long hall she glistens like a star,
The foam-born mother of Love, transfixed to stone,
Yet none the less immortal, breathing on.
Time's brutal hand hath maimed but could not mar.
When first the enthralled enchantress from afar
Dazzled mine eyes, I saw not her alone,
Serenely poised on her world-worshipped throne,
As when she guided once her dove-drawn car, —
But at her feet a pale, death-stricken Jew,
Her life adorer, sobbed farewell to love.
Here *Heine* wept! Here still he weeps anew,
Nor ever shall his shadow lift or move,
While mourns one ardent heart, one poet-brain,
For vanished Hellas and Hebraic pain.

CHOPIN.

I.

A DREAM of interlinking hands, of feet
Tireless to spin the unseen, fairy woof,
Of the entangling waltz. Bright eyebeams meet,
Gay laughter echoes from the vaulted roof.
Warm perfumes rise; the soft unflickering glow
Of branching lights sets off the changeful charms
Of glancing gems, rich stuffs, the dazzling snow
Of necks unkerchieft, and bare, clinging arms.
Hark to the music! How beneath the strain
Of reckless revelry, vibrates and sobs
One fundamental chord of constant pain,
The pulse-beat of the poet's heart that throbs.
So yearns, though all the dancing waves rejoice,
The troubled sea's disconsolate, deep voice.

II.

Who shall proclaim the golden fable false
Of Orpheus' miracles? This subtle strain
Above our prose-world's sordid loss and gain
Lightly uplifts us. With the rhythmic waltz,
The lyric prelude, the nocturnal song
Of love and languor, varied visions rise,
That melt and blend to our enchanted eyes.
The Polish poet who sleeps silenced long,
The seraph-souled musician, breathes again
Eternal eloquence, immortal pain.

Revived the exalted face we know so well,
The illuminated eyes, the fragile frame,
Slowly consuming with its inward flame,
We stir not, speak not, lest we break the spell.

III.

A voice was needed, sweet and true and fine
As the sad spirit of the evening breeze,
Throbbing with human passion, yet divine
As the wild bird's untutored melodies.
A voice for him 'neath twilight heavens dim,
Who mourneth for his dead, while round him fall
The wan and noiseless leaves. A voice for him
Who sees the first green sprout, who hears the call
Of the first robin on the first spring day.
A voice for all whom Fate hath set apart,
Who, still misprized, must perish by the way,
Longing with love, for that they lack the art
Of their own soul's expression. For all these
Sing the unspoken hope, the vague, sad reveries.

IV.

Then Nature shaped a poet's heart — a lyre
From out whose chords the lightest breeze that blows
Drew trembling music, wakening sweet desire.
How shall she cherish him? Behold! she throws

This precious, fragile treasure in the whirl
Of seething passions; he is scourged and stung,
Must dive in storm-vext seas, if but one pearl
Of art or beauty therefrom may be wrung.
No pure-browed pensive nymph his Muse shall be,
An amazon of thought with sovereign eyes,
Whose kiss was poison, man-brained, worldly-wise,
Inspired that elfin, delicate harmony.
Rich gain for us! But with him is it well?
The poet who must sound earth, heaven, and hell!

SYMPHONIC STUDIES.

(AFTER ROBERT SCHUMANN.)

PRELUDE.

BLUE storm-clouds in hot heavens of mid-July
Hung heavy, brooding over land and sea:
Our hearts, a-tremble, throbbed in harmony
With the wild, restless tone of air and sky.
Shall we not call him Prospero who held
In his enchanted hands the fateful key
Of that tempestuous hour's mystery,
And with controlling wand our spirits spelled,
With him to wander by a sun-bright shore,
To hear fine, fairy voices, and to fly

With disembodied Ariel once more
Above earth's wrack and ruin? Far and nigh
The laughter of the thunder echoed loud,
And harmless lightnings leapt from cloud to cloud.

I.

Floating upon a swelling wave of sound,
We seemed to overlook an endless sea:
Poised 'twixt clear heavens and glittering surf were we.
We drank the air in flight: we knew no bound
To the audacious ventures of desire.
Nigh us the sun was dropping, drowned in gold;
Deep, deep below the burning billows rolled;
And all the sea sang like a smitten lyre.
Oh, the wild voices of those chanting waves!
The human faces glimpsed beneath the tide!
Familiar eyes gazed from profound sea-caves,
And we, exalted, were as we had died.
We knew the sea was Life, the harmonious cry
The blended discords of humanity.

II.

Look deeper yet: mark 'midst the wave-blurred mass,
In lines distinct, in colors clear defined,
The typic groups and figures of mankind.
Behold within the cool and liquid glass

Bright child-folk sporting with smooth yellow shells,
Astride of dolphins, leaping up to kiss
Fair mother-faces. From the vast abyss
How joyously their thought-free laughter wells!
Some slumber in grim caverns unafraid,
Lulled by the overwhelming water's sound,
And some make mouths at dragons, undismayed.
Oh dauntless innocence! The gulfs profound
Reëcho strangely with their ringing glee,
And with wise mermaids' plaintive melody.

III.

What do the sea-nymphs in that coral cave?
With wondering eyes their supple forms they bend
O'er something rarely beautiful. They lend
Their lithe white arms, and through the golden wave
They lift it tenderly. Oh blinding sight!
A naked, radiant goddess, tranced in sleep,
Full-limbed, voluptuous, 'neath the mantling sweep
Of auburn locks that kiss her ankles white!
Upward they bear her, chanting low and sweet:
The clinging waters part before their way,
Jewels of flame are dancing 'neath their feet.
Up in the sunshine, on soft foam, they lay
Their precious burden, and return forlorn.
Oh, bliss! oh, anguish! Mortals, *Love* is born!

IV.

Hark! from unfathomable deeps a dirge
Swells sobbing through the melancholy air:
Where Love has entered, Death is also there.
The wail outrings the chafed, tumultuous surge;
Ocean and earth, the illimitable skies,
Prolong one note, a mourning for the dead,
The cry of souls not to be comforted.
What piercing music! Funeral visions rise,
And send the hot tears raining down our cheek.
We see the silent grave upon the hill
With its lone lilac-bush. O heart, be still!
She will not rise, she will not stir nor speak.
Surely, the unreturning dead are blest.
Ring on, sweet dirge, and knell us to our rest!

V.

Upon the silver beach the undines dance
With interlinking arms and flying hair;
Like polished marble gleam their limbs left bare;
Upon their virgin rites pale moonbeams glance.
Softer the music! for their foam-bright feet
Print not the moist floor where they trip their round:
Affrighted they will scatter at a sound,
Leap in their cool sea-chambers, nimbly fleet,
And we shall doubt that we have ever seen,
While our sane eyes behold stray wreaths of mist,

Shot with faint colors by the moon-rays
kissed,
Floating snow-soft, snow-white, where these
had been.
Already, look! the wave-washed sands are
bare,
And mocking laughter ripples through the air.

VI.

Divided 'twixt the dream-world and the real,
We heard the waxing passion of the song
Soar as to scale the heavens on pinions
strong.
Amidst the long-reverberant thunder-peal,
Against the rain-blurred square of light, the
head
Of the pale poet at the lyric keys
Stood boldly cut, absorbed in reveries,
While over it keen-bladed lightnings played.
"Rage on, wild storm!" the music seemed to
sing:
"Not all the thunders of thy wrath can
move
The soul that 's dedicate to worshipping
Eternal Beauty, everlasting Love."
No more! the song was ended, and behold,
A rainbow trembling on a sky of gold!

EPILOGUE.

Forth in the sunlit, rain-bathed air we stepped,
Sweet with the dripping grass and flowering vine,
And saw through irised clouds the pale sun shine.
Back o'er the hills the rain-mist slowly crept
Like a transparent curtain's silvery sheen;
And fronting us the painted bow was arched,
Whereunder the majestic cloud-shapes marched:
In the wet, yellow light the dazzling green
Of lawn and bush and tree seemed stained with blue.
Our hearts o'erflowed with peace. With smiles we spake
Of partings in the past, of courage new,
Of high achievement, of the dreams that make
A wonder and a glory of our days,
And all life's music but a hymn of praise.

LONG ISLAND SOUND.

I SEE it as it looked one afternoon
In August, — by a fresh soft breeze o'erblown.
The swiftness of the tide, the light thereon,
A far-off sail, white as a crescent moon.

The shining waters with pale currents strewn,
The quiet fishing-smacks, the Eastern cove,
The semi-circle of its dark, green grove.
The luminous grasses, and the merry sun
In the grave sky ; the sparkle far and wide,
Laughter of unseen children, cheerful chirp
Of crickets, and low lisp of rippling tide,
Light summer clouds fantastical as sleep
Changing unnoted while I gazed thereon.
All these fair sounds and sights I made my own.

DESTINY.

1856.

Paris, from throats of iron, silver, brass,
Joy-thundering cannon, blent with chiming bells,
And martial strains, the full-voiced pæan swells.
The air is starred with flags, the chanted mass
Throngs all the churches, yet the broad streets swarm
With glad-eyed groups who chatter, laugh, and pass,
In holiday confusion, class with class.
And over all the spring, the sun-floods warm!
In the Imperial palace that March morn,
The beautiful young mother lay and smiled ;
For by her side just breathed the Prince, her child,
Heir to an empire, to the purple born,

Crowned with the Titan's name that stirs the heart
Like a blown clarion — one more Bonaparte.

1879.

Born to the purple, lying stark and dead,
Transfixed with poisoned spears, beneath the sun
Of brazen Africa! Thy grave is one,
Fore-fated youth (on whom were visited
Follies and sins not thine), whereat the world,
Heartless howe'er it be, will pause to sing
A dirge, to breathe a sigh, a wreath to fling
Of rosemary and rue with bay-leaves curled.
Enmeshed in toils ambitious, not thine own,
Immortal, loved boy-Prince, thou tak'st thy stand
With early doomed Don Carlos, hand in hand
With mild-browed Arthur, Geoffrey's murdered son.
Louis the Dauphin lifts his thorn-ringed head,
And welcomes thee, his brother, 'mongst the dead.

FROM ONE AUGUR TO ANOTHER.

So, Calchas, on the sacred Palatine,
You thought of Mopsus, and o'er wastes of sea
A flower brought your message. I divine
(Through my deep art) the kindly mockery
That played about your lips and in your eyes,
Plucking the frail leaf, while you dreamed of home.

Thanks for the silent greeting! I shall prize,
Beyond June's rose, the scentless flower of Rome.
All the Campagna spreads before my sight,
The mouldering wall, the Cæsars' tombs unwreathed,
Rome and the Tiber, and the yellow light,
Wherein the honey-colored blossom breathed.
But most I thank it — egoists that we be!
For proving then and there you thought of me.

THE CRANES OF IBYCUS.

There was a man who watched the river flow
Past the huge town, one gray November day.
Round him in narrow high-piled streets at play
The boys made merry as they saw him go,
Murmuring half-loud, with eyes upon the stream,
The immortal screed he held within his hand.
For he was walking in an April land
With Faust and Helen. Shadowy as a dream
Was the prose-world, the river and the town.
Wild joy possessed him; through enchanted skies
He saw the cranes of Ibycus swoop down.
He closed the page, he lifted up his eyes,
Lo — a black line of birds in wavering thread
Bore him the greetings of the deathless dead!

CRITIC AND POET.

AN APOLOGUE.

("Poetry must be simple, sensuous, or impassioned; this man is neither simple, sensuous, nor impassioned; therefore he is not a poet.")

No man had ever heard a nightingale,
When once a keen-eyed naturalist was stirred
To study and define — *what is a bird*,
To classify by rote and book, nor fail
To mark its structure and to note the scale
Whereon its song might possibly be heard.
Thus far, no farther; — so he spake the word.
When of a sudden, — hark, the nightingale!

Oh deeper, higher than he could divine
That all-unearthly, untaught strain! He saw
The plain, brown warbler, unabashed. "Not mine"
(He cried) "the error of this fatal flaw.
No bird is this, it soars beyond my line,
Were it a bird, 't would answer to my law."

ST. MICHAEL'S CHAPEL.

When the vexed hubbub of our world of gain
Roars round about me as I walk the street,
The myriad noise of Traffic, and the beat
Of Toil's incessant hammer, the fierce strain
Of Struggle hand to hand and brain to brain,
Ofttimes a sudden dream my sense will cheat,
The gaudy shops, the sky-piled roofs retreat,
And all at once I stand enthralled again
Within a marble minster over-seas.
I watch the solemn gold-stained gloom that creeps
To kiss an alabaster tomb, where sleeps
A lady 'twixt two knights' stone effigies,
And every day in dusky glory steeps
Their sculptured slumber of five centuries.

LIFE AND ART.

Not while the fever of the blood is strong,
The heart throbs loud, the eyes are veiled, no less
With passion than with tears, the Muse shall bless
The poet-soul to help and soothe with song.
Not then she bids his trembling lips express
The aching gladness, the voluptuous pain.
Life is his poem then; flesh, sense, and brain
One full-stringed lyre attuned to happiness.

But when the dream is done, the pulses fail,
The day's illusion, with the day's sun set,
He, lonely in the twilight, sees the pale
Divine Consoler, featured like Regret,
Enter and clasp his hand and kiss his brow.
Then his lips ope to sing — as mine do now.

SYMPATHY.

THEREFORE I dare reveal my private woe,
The secret blots of my imperfect heart,
Nor strive to shrink or swell mine own desert,
Nor beautify nor hide. For this I know,
That even as I am, thou also art.
Thou past heroic forms unmoved shalt go,
To pause and bide with me, to whisper low:
"Not I alone am weak, not I apart
Must suffer, struggle, conquer day by day.
Here is my very cross by strangers borne,
Here is my bosom-sin wherefrom I pray
Hourly deliverance — this my rose, my thorn.
This woman my soul's need can understand,
Stretching o'er silent gulfs her sister hand."

YOUTH AND DEATH.

What hast thou done to this dear friend of mine,
Thou cold, white, silent Stranger? From my hand
Her clasped hand slips to meet the grasp of thine;
Her eyes that flamed with love, at thy command
Stare stone-blank on blank air; her frozen heart
Forgets my presence. Teach me who thou art,
Vague shadow sliding 'twixt my friend and me.
I never saw thee till this sudden hour.
What secret door gave entrance unto thee?
What power is thine, o'ermastering Love's own power?

AGE AND DEATH.

Come closer, kind, white, long-familiar friend,
Embrace me, fold me to thy broad, soft breast.
Life has grown strange and cold, but thou dost bend
Mild eyes of blessing wooing to my rest.
So often hast thou come, and from my side
So many hast thou lured, I only bide
Thy beck, to follow glad thy steps divine.
Thy world is peopled for me; this world's bare.

Through all these years my couch thou didst
prepare.
Thou art supreme Love — kiss me — I am thine!

CITY VISIONS.

I.

As the blind Milton's memory of light,
The deaf Beethoven's phantasy of tone,
Wrought joys for them surpassing all things
known
In our restricted sphere of sound and sight,—
So while the glaring streets of brick and stone
Vex with heat, noise, and dust from morn till
night,
I will give rein to Fancy, taking flight
From dismal now and here, and dwell alone
With new-enfranchised senses. All day long,
Think ye 't is I, who sit 'twixt darkened walls,
While ye chase beauty over land and sea?
Uplift on wings of some rare poet's song,
Where the wide billow laughs and leaps and
falls,
I soar cloud-high, free as the winds are free.

II.

Who grasps the substance? who 'mid shadows
strays?
He who within some dark-bright wood reclines,

'Twixt sleep and waking, where the needled pines
Have cushioned all his couch with soft brown sprays?
He notes not how the living water shines,
Trembling along the cliff, a flickering haze,
Brimming a wine-bright pool, nor lifts his gaze
To read the ancient wonders and the signs.
Does he possess the actual, or do I,
Who paint on air more than his sense receives,
The glittering pine-tufts with closed eyes behold,
Breathe the strong resinous perfume, see the sky
Quiver like azure flame between the leaves,
And open unseen gates with key of gold?

INFLUENCE.

The fervent, pale-faced Mother ere she sleep,
Looks out upon the zigzag-lighted square,
The beautiful bare trees, the blue night-air,
The revelation of the star-strewn deep,
World above world, and heaven over heaven.
Between the tree-tops and the skies, her sight
Rests on a steadfast, ruddy-shining light,
High in the tower, an earthly star of even.
Hers is the faith in saints' and angels' power,
And mediating love — she breathes a prayer

For yon tired watcher in the gray old tower.
He the shrewd, skeptic poet unaware
Feels comforted and stilled, and knows not whence
Falls this unwonted peace on heart and sense.

RESTLESSNESS.[1]

Would I had waked this morn where Florence smiles,
A-bloom with beauty, a white rose full-blown,
Yet rich in sacred dust, in storied stone,
Precious past all the wealth of Indian isles —
From olive-hoary Fiesole to feed
On Brunelleschi's dome my hungry eye,
And see against the lotus-colored sky,
Spring the slim belfry graceful as a reed.
To kneel upon the ground where Dante trod,
To breathe the air of immortality
From Angelo and Raphael — *to be* —
Each sense new-quickened by a demi-god.
To hear the liquid Tuscan speech at whiles,
From citizen and peasant, to behold
The heaven of Leonardo washed with gold —
Would I had waked this morn where Florence smiles!

[1] Written before visiting Florence.

THE SPAGNOLETTO.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DON JOHN OF AUSTRIA.
JOSEF RIBERA, *the Spagnoletto.*
LORENZO, *noble young Italian artist, pupil of Ribera.*
DON TOMMASO MANZANO.
LUCA, *servant to Ribera.*
A GENTLEMAN.
FIRST LORD.
SECOND LORD.

MARIA-ROSA, *daughter to Ribera.*
ANNICCA, *daughter to Ribera, and wife to Don Tommaso.*
FIAMETTA, *servant to Maria-Rosa.*
ABBESS.
LAY-SISTER.
FIRST LADY.
SECOND LADY.

Lords, Ladies, Gentlemen, Servants.

SCENE — *During the first four acts, in Naples; latter part of the fifth act, in Palermo. Time, about* 1655.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Studio of the SPAGNOLETTO. RIBERA *at work before his canvas.* MARIA *seated some little distance behind him; a piece of embroidery is in her hands, but she glances up from it incessantly toward her father with impatient movements.*

MARIA.

Father!

(RIBERA, *absorbed in his work, makes no reply; she puts by her embroidery, goes toward him and kisses him gently. He starts, looks up at her, and returns her caress.*)

RIBERA.

My child!

MARIA.

Already you forget,
Oh, heedless father! Did you not promise me
To lay aside your brush to-day at noon,
And tell me the great secret?

RIBERA.

Ah, 't is true,
I am to blame. But it is morning yet;
My child, wait still a little.

MARIA.

'T is morning yet!
Nay, it was noon one mortal hour ago.

All patience I have sat till you should turn
And beckon me. The rosy angels breathe
Upon the canvas ; I might sit till night,
And, if I spake not, you would never glance
From their celestial faces. Dear my father,
Your brow is moist, and yet your hands are ice ;
Your very eyes are tired — pray, rest awhile.
The Spagnoletto need no longer toil
As in the streets of Rome for beggars' fare ;
Now princes bide his pleasure.

RIBERA (*throws aside his brush and palette*).

Ah, Maria,
Thou speak'st in season. Let me ne'er forget
Those days of degradation, when I starved
Before the gates of palaces. The germs
Stirred then within me of the perfect fruits
Wherewith my hands have since enriched God's world.
Vengeance I vowed for every moment's sting —
Vengeance on wealth, rank, station, fortune, genius.
See, while I paint, all else escapes my sense,
Save this bright throng of phantasies that press
Upon my brain, each claiming from my hand
Its immortality. But thou, my child,
Remind'st me of mine oath, my sacred pride,
The eternal hatred lodged within my breast.
Philip of Spain shall wait. I will not deign
To add to-day the final touch of life
Unto this masterpiece.

MARIA.

So! that is well.
Put by the envious brush that separates
Father from daughter. Now you are all mine own.
And now — your secret.

RIBERA.

Mine? 'T is none of mine;
'T is thine, Maria. John of Austria
Desires our presence at his ball to-night.

MARIA.

Prince John?

RIBERA.

Ay, girl, Prince John. I looked to see
A haughty joy dance sparkling in thine eyes
And burn upon thy cheek. But what is this?
Timid and pale, thou droop'st thy head abashed
As a poor flower-girl whom a lord accosts.

MARIA.

Forgive me. Sure, 't is you Don John desires,
The prince of artists —

RIBERA.

Art! Prate not of art!
Think'st thou I move an artist 'midst his guests?

As such I commune with a loftier race ;
Angels and spirits are my ministers.
These do I part aside to grace his halls ;
A Spanish gentleman — and so, his peer.

MARIA.

Father, I am not well ; my head throbs fast,
Unwonted languor weighs upon my frame.

RIBERA.

Anger me not, Maria. 'T is my will,
Thou shalt obey. Hell, what these women be!
No obstacle would daunt them in the quest
Of that which, freely given, they reject.
Hold! Haply just occasion bids thee seem
Unlike thyself. Speak fearlessly, dear child ;
Confide to me thy knowledge, thy surmise.

MARIA (*hurriedly*).

No, father, you were right. I have no cause ;
Punish me — nay, forgive, and I obey.

RIBERA.

There spake my child ; kiss me and be forgiven.
Sometimes I doubt thou playest upon my love
Willfully, knowing me as soft as clay,
Whom the world knows of marble. In such moods,
I see my spirit mirror'd first, and then
From thy large eyes thy sainted mother's soul
Unclouded shine.

MARIA.

Can I be like to her?
I only knew her faded, white, and grave,
And so she still floats vaguely through my dreams,
With eyes like your own angels', and a brow
Worthy an aureole.

RIBERA.

An earthly crown,
My princess, might more fitly rest on thine.
Annicca hath her colors, blue-black hair,
And pale, brown flesh, and gray, untroubled eyes;
Yet thou more often bring'st her to my mind,
For all the tawny gold of thy thick locks,
Thy rare white face, and brilliant Spanish orbs.
Thine is her lisping trick of voice, her laugh,
The blithest music still this side of heaven;
Thine her free, springing gait, though therewithal
A swaying, languid motion all thine own,
Recalls Valencia more than Italy.
Like and unlike thou art to her, as still
My memory loves to hold her, as she first
Beamed like the star of morning on my life.
Hot, faint, and footsore, I had paced since dawn
The sun-baked streets of Naples, seeking work,
Not alms, despite the beggar that I looked.

Now 't was nigh vespers, and my suit had met
With curt refusal, sharp rebuff, and gibes.
Praised be the saints! for every drop of gall
In that day's brimming cup, I have upheld
A poisoned beaker to another's lips.
Many a one hath the Ribera taught
To fare a vagabond through alien streets;
A god unrecognized 'midst churls and clowns,
With kindled soul aflame, and body faint
For lack of bread. Domenichino knows,
And Gessi, Guido, Annibal Caracci —

MARIA.

Dear father, calm yourself. You had begun
To tell me how you saw my mother first.

RIBERA.

True, I forgot it not. Why, I *am* calm;
The old man now can well be grave and cold,
Or laugh at his own youth's indignities,
Past a long lifetime back. 'T was vespers' hour,
Or nigh it, when I reached her father's door.
Kind was his greeting, the first cordial words
I heard in Naples; but I took small heed
Of speech or tone, for all my sense was rapt
In wonder at the angel by his side
Who smiled upon me. Large, clear eyes that held
The very soul of sunlight in their depths;
Low, pure, pale brow, with masses of black hair

Flung loosely back, and rippling unconfined
In shadowy magnificence below
The slim gold girdle o'er the snow-soft gown.
Vested and draped in close-woven stuff of white,
With gold about her throat and waist and wrists,
A stately lily ere the dew of morn
Hath passed away — such was thy mother, child.

MARIA.

Would I were like her! But what said she, father?
How did she plead for you?

RIBERA.

Ah, cunning child,
I see thy tricks; thou humorest my age,
Knowing how much I love to tell this tale,
Though thou hast heard it half a hundred times.

MARIA.

I find it sweet to hear as you to tell,
Believe me, father.

RIBERA.

'T was to pleasure her,
Signor Cortese gave me all I lacked
To prove my unfamed skill. A savage pride,
Matched oddly with my rags, the haughtiness
Wherewith I claimed rather than begged my tools,

And my quaint aspect, oft she told me since,
Won at a glance her faith. Before I left,
She guessed my need, and served me meat and wine
With her own flower-white hands. The parting grace
I craved was granted, that my work might be
The portrait of herself. Thou knowest the rest.

MARIA.

Why did she leave us, father? Oh, how oft
I yearn to see her face, to hear her voice,
Hushed in an endless silence! Strange that she,
Whose rich love beggared our return, should bear
Such separation! Though engirdled now
By heavenly hosts of saints and seraphim,
I cannot fancy it. What! shall her child,
Whose lightest sigh reëchoed in her heart,
Have need of her and cry to her in vain?

RIBERA.

Now, for God's sake, Maria, speak not thus;
Let me not see such tears upon thy cheek.
Not unto us it has been given to guess
The peace of disembodied souls like hers.
The vanishing glimpses that my fancies catch
Through heaven's half-opened gates, exalt even me,
Poor sinner that I am. And what are these,

The painted shadows that make all my life
A glory, to the splendor of that light?
For thee, my child, has not my doting love
Sufficed, at least in part, to fill the breach
Of that tremendous void? What dost thou lack?
What help, what counsel, what most dear caress?
What dost thou covet? What least whim remains
Ungratified, because not yet expressed?

MARIA.

None, none, dear father! Pardon me! Thy love,
Generous and wise as tender, shames my power
To merit or repay. Fie on my lips!
Look if they be not blistered. Let them smooth
With contrite kisses the last frown away.
We must be young to-night — no wrinkles then!
Genius must show immortal as she is.

RIBERA.

Thou wilt unman me with thy pretty ways.
I had forgot the ball. Yea, I grow old;
This scanty morning's work has wearied me.
Once I had thought it play to dream all day
Before my canvas and then dance till dawn,
And now must I give o'er and rest at noon.

[*Rises.*

Enter LUCA, *ushering in* LORENZO, *who carries a portfolio.*

LUCA.

Signor Lorenzo.

[LORENZO *ceremoniously salutes* RIBERA *and* MARIA. *Exit* LUCA.

LORENZO.

Master, I bring my sketch.

[*Opens his portfolio and hands a sketch to* RIBERA.

RIBERA (*after a pause*).

Humph! the design is not so ill-conceived;
I note some progress; but your drawing 's bad —
Yes, bad, sir. Mark you how this leg hangs limp,
As though devoid of life; these hands seem clenched,
Not loosely clasped, as you intended them.
[*He takes his pencil and makes a few strokes.*
Thus should it stand — a single line will mend.
And here, what 's this? Why, 't is a sloven's work.
You dance too many nights away, young gallant.
You shirk close labor as do all your mates.
You think to win with service frivolous,
Snatched 'twixt your cups, or set between two kisses,
The favor of the mistress of the world.

LORENZO.

Your pardon, master, but you do me wrong.

Mayhap I lack the gift. Alas, I fear it!
But not the patience, not the energy
Of earnest, indefatigable toil,
That help to make the artist.

RIBERA.

'S death! He dares
Belie me, and deny the testimony
Of his own handiwork, whose every line
Betrays a sluggard soul, an indolent will,
A brain that 's bred to idleness. So be it!
Master Lorenzo tells the Spagnoletto
His own defects and qualities! 'T were best
He find another teacher competent
To guide so apt, so diligent a scholar.

MARIA.

Dear father, what hath given thee offence?
Cast but another glance upon the sketch;
Surely it hath some grace, some charm, some promise.

RIBERA.

Daughter, stand by! I know these insolent slips
Of young nobility; they lack the stuff
That makes us artists. What! to answer me!
When next I drop a hint as to his colors,
The lengthening or the shortening of a stroke,
He 'll bandy words with me about his error,
To prove himself the master.

LORENZO.

If my defect
Be an hereditary grain i' the blood,
Even as you say, I must abide by it;
But if patrician habits more than birth
Beget such faults, then may I dare to hope.
Not mine, I knew, I felt, to clear new paths,
To win new kingdoms; yet were I content
With such achievement as a strenuous will,
A firm endeavor, an unfaltering love,
And an unwearying spirit might attain.
Cast me not lightly back. Banish me not
From this, my home of hope, of inspiration!

MARIA.

What, my ungentle father! Will you hear,
And leave this worthy signor's suit unanswered?

RIBERA.

Well, he may bide. Sir, I will speak with you
Anon upon this work. I judged in haste.
Yea, it hath merit. I am weary now;
To-morrow I shall be in fitter mood
To give you certain hints.

[LORENZO *bows his thanks and advances to address* MARIA. RIBERA *silences and dismisses him with a wave of the hand.* *Exit* LORENZO.

RIBERA.

Should I o'ersleep
Mine hour, Maria, thou must awaken me;
But come what may, I will be fresh to-night,
To triumph in thy triumph. [*Exit* RIBERA.

MARIA (*alone*).

Could I have told,
Then when he bade me? Nay, what is to tell?
He had flouted me for prizing at such height
Homage so slight from John of Austria, even.
A glance exchanged, a smile, a fallen flower
Dropped from my hair, and pressed against his lips.
The Prince! my father gloats upon that name.
Were he no more than gentleman, I think
I should be glad. I cannot tell to-day
If I be sad or gay. Now could I weep
Warm, longing tears; anon, a fire of joy
Leaps in my heart and dances through my veins.
Why should I nurse such idle thoughts? To-night
We are to meet again. Will he remember? —
Nay, how should he forget? His heart is young;
His eyes do mirror loyalty. Oh, day!
Quicken thy dull, slow round of tedious hours!
God make me beautiful this happy night!
My father's sleeping saint rebukes my thought.

Strange he has left his work, against his wont,
Revealed before completed. I will draw
The curtain.

[*She stands irresolute before the picture, with her hand on the curtain.*

Beautiful, oh, beautiful!
The far, bright, opened heavens — the dark earth,
Where the tranced pilgrim lies, with eyelids sealed,
His calm face flushed with comfortable sleep,
His weary limbs relaxed, his heavy head
Pillowed upon the stone. Oh, blessed dream
That visits his rapt sense, of airy forms,
Mounting, descending on the shining ladder,
With messages of peace. I will be true
Unto my lineage divine, and breathe
The passion of just pride that overfills
His soul inspired.

While she stands before the canvas, reënter, unperceived by her, LORENZO.

LORENZO.

Oh, celestial vision!
What brush may reproduce those magic tints,
Those lines ethereal? —

MARIA (*turns suddenly*).

Is it not marvellous,
Signor Lorenzo? I would draw the curtain,
But, gazing, I forgot.

You are the first,
After the master and myself, to look
Upon this wonder.

LORENZO (*with enthusiasm, looking for the first time at the picture*).

Ah, what an answer this
For envious minds that would restrict his power
To writhing limbs and shrivelled flesh! Repose,
Beauty, and large simplicity are here.
Yes, that is art! Before such work I stand
And feel myself a dwarf.

MARIA.

There, you are wrong.
My father even, who knows his proper worth,
Before his best achievements I have seen
In like dejection; 't is the curse of genius.
Oft have I heard the master grace your name
With flattering addition.

LORENZO.

'T is your goodness,
And not the echo of his praise, that speaks.
My work was worthless — 't was your generous voice
Alone secured the master's second glance.

MARIA.

Nay, signor, frankly, he esteems your talent.

Because you are of well-assured means
And gentle birth, he will be rude with you.
Not without base is the deep grudge he owes
To riches and prosperity.

LORENZO.

Signora,
Why do I bear such harsh, injurious terms
As he affronts me with? Why must I seem
In mine own eyes a craven? Spiritless,
Dishonorably patient? 'T is not his fame,
His power, his gift, his venerable years
That bind me here his willing slave. Maria,
'T is thou, 't is thou alone! 'T is that I love thee,
And exile hence is death!

[*A pause. He kneels at her feet. She looks at him kindly but makes no reply.*

At thy dear feet
I lay my life with its most loyal service,
The subject of thy pleasure.

MARIA (*tenderly*).

You are too humble.

LORENZO.

Too humble! Do you seek mine utter ruin,
With words whose very tone is a caress?
I will say all. I love you! — you have known it.
Why should I tell you? Yet, to-day you seem
Other than you have been. A milder light

Beams from your eyes — a gentler grace is
throned
Upon your brow — your words fall soft as dew
To melt my fixed resolve.

MARIA.

You find me, signor,
In an unguarded mood. I would be true
To you; and to myself; yet, know no answer.
Anon, I will be calm; pray you withdraw.

LORENZO.

Till when? Remember what mad hopes and
fears
Meantime will riot in my brain.

MARIA.

To-morrow —
Farewell, farewell.

LORENZO (*kisses her hand*).

Farewell. [*Exit.*

MARIA.

A faithful heart,
A name untainted, a fair home — yea, these
Are what I need. Oh, lily soul in heaven,
Who wast on earth my mother, guide thy child!

While MARIA *sits rapt in thought, enter from behind her,* ANNICCA, *who bends over her and kisses her brow.*

ANNICCA.

What, sister! lost in dreams by daylight? Fie!
Who is the monarch of thy thoughts?

MARIA (*starting*).

Annicca!
My thoughts are bounden to no master yet;
They fly from earth to heaven in a breath.
Now are they all of earth. Hast heard the tidings?

ANNICCA.

Yea — of the prince's ball? We go together.
Braid in thy hair our mother's pearls, and wear
The amulet ingemmed with eastern stones;
'T will bring good fortune.

MARIA.

Tell me, ere we go,
What manner of man is John of Austria?

ANNICCA.

Scarce man at all — a madcap, charming boy;
Well-favored — you have seen him — exquisite
In courtly compliment, of simple manners;
You may not hear a merrier laugh than his
From any boatman on the bay; well-versed
In all such arts as most become his station;
Light in the dance as winged-foot Mercury,

Eloquent on the zither, and a master
Of rapier and —

MARIA.

A puppet could be made
To answer in all points your praise of him.
Hath he no substance of a man?

ANNICCA.

Why, sister,
What may that be to us?

MARIA.

He is our Prince.

ANNICCA.

The promise of his youth is to outstrip
The hero of Lepanto; bright and bold
As fire, he is the very soul, the star
Of Spanish chivalry; his last achievement
Seems still the flower of his accomplishments.
Musician, soldier, courtier, yea, and artist.
"He had been a painter, were he not a prince,"
Says Messer Zurbaran. The Calderona,
His actress-mother, hath bequeathed to him
Her spirit with her beauty, and the power
To win and hold men's hearts.

MARIA.

I knew it, sister!
His eye hath a command in it; his brow
Seems garlanded with laurel.

ANNICCA.

What is this?
You kindle with his praise, your whole heart glows
In light and color on your face, your words
Take wing and fly as bold as reckless birds.
What! can so rash a thought, a dream so wild,
So hopeless an ambition, tempt your soul?

MARIA.

Pray you, what thought, what dream, and what ambition?
I knew not I had uttered any such.

ANNICCA.

Nor have you in your speech; your eyes now veiled,
Where the light leaped to hear me voice his fame,
Your blushes and your pallor have betrayed
That which should lie uncounted fathom deep —
The secret of a woman's foolish heart.

MARIA.

And there it lies, my sibyl sister, still!
Your plummet hath not reached it. Yes, 't is love
Flaunts his triumphant colors in my cheek,
And quickens my lame speech — but not for him,
Not for the Prince — so may I vaunt his worth
With a free soul.

ANNICCA.

Say on.

MARIA.

A gentleman,
Favored of earth and heaven, true and loving,
Hath cast his heart at my imperial feet;
And if to-morrow find me as to-day,
I will e'en stoop and raise it to mine own.

ANNICCA.

Signor Vitruvio?

MARIA.

Not he, indeed!
Did not I say favored of earth and heaven?
That should mean other gifts than bags of gold,
Or a straight-featured mask. Nor will it be
Any you name, though you should name him right.
Must it not lie — how many fathom deep —
The secret of a woman's foolish heart?

ANNICCA.

Kiss me, Maria. You are still a child.
You cannot vex me, wilful as you be.
Your choice, I fear not, doubtless 't will prove wise,
Despite your wild wit, for your heart is pure,

And you will pause with sure deliberate judgment
Before you leave our father.

MARIA.

Does love steal
So gently o'er our soul? What if he come,
A cloud, a fire, a whirlwind, to o'erbear
The feeble barriers wherewith we oppose him,
And blind our eyes and wrest from us our reason?
Fear not, Annicca, for in no such guise
He visits my calm breast; but yet you speak
Somewhat too sagely. Did such cautious wisdom
Guide your own fancy?

ANNICCA.

Jest no more, Maria.
Since I became a wife, is much made clear,
Which a brief year ago was dark and vague.
Tommaso loves me — we are happier
Than I had dreamed; yet matching now with then,
I see his love is not that large, rich passion
Our father bore us.

MARIA.

You regret your home?

ANNICCA.

No, no! I have no wish and no regret.
I speak for you. His is a sovereign soul,
And all his passions loom in huger shape
Than lesser men's. He brooks no rivalry
With his own offspring, and toward me his love
Hath ebbed, I mark, to a more even flow,
While deeper, stronger, sets the powerful current
Toward you alone. Consider this, Maria,
Nor wantonly discrown that sacred head
Of your young love to wreathe some curled boy's
brow.

MARIA.

Think you his wish were that I should not wed?

ANNICCA.

Nay, that I say not, for his pride aspires
To see you nobly mated.

MARIA (*after a pause*).

Him will I wed
Whose name is ancient, fair, and honorable,
As the Ribera's is illustrious —
Him who no less than I will venerate
That white, divine old head. In art his pupil,
In love his son; tender as I to watch,
And to delay the slow extinguishing
Of that great light.

ANNICCA.

There spake his darling child!

MARIA.

What is 't o'clock? If he should sleep too late —
He bade me rouse him —

ANNICCA.

Haste to seek him, then.
'T is hard on sunset, and he looks for thee
With his first waking motion. Till to night.

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE IV.

A Hall in RIBERA'S *house. Enter* LUCA *and* FIAMETTA.

FIAMETTA.

But did you see her?

LUCA.

Nay, I saw her sister, Donna Annicca.

FIAMETTA.

Tush, man! never name her beside my lady Maria-Rosa. You have lost the richest feast in the world for hungry eyes. Her gown of cloth o' silver clad her, as it were, with light; there

twinkled about her waist a girdle stiff with stones — you would have said they breathed. Mine own hands wreathed the dropping pearls in her hair, and pearls again were clasped around her throat. But no, I might tell thee every ornament — her jeweled fan, her comb of pearls, her floating veil of gauze, and still the best of all would escape us.

LUCA.

Thou speakest more like her page than her handmaiden.

FIAMETTA.

Thou knowest not woman truly, for all thy wit. I speak most like a woman when I weigh the worth of beauty and rich apparel. Heigh-ho! I have felt the need of this. Thou, good Luca, who might have been my father, canst understand me? *He* was as poor as thou. Why shouldst thou be his lackey, his slave? My hand were as dainty as hers, if it could but be spared its daily labor.

LUCA.

Yes, poor child, I understand thee, and yet thou art wrong. He is more slave to pride than I am to him. I know him well, Fiametta, after so many years of service, and to-day I pity him more than I fear him. Why, girl, my task is

sport beside his toil! If my limbs be weary, I sleep; but I have seen him sit before his canvas with straining eyes and the big beads standing on his brow. When at last he gave o'er, and I have smoothed his pillow, and served and soothed him, what sleep could he snatch? His brain is haunted with evil visions, whereof some be merely of his own imagining, and others the phantoms of folk who are living or have lived, and who rouse his jealousy or mayhap his remorse, God only knows! If that be genius — to be alive to pain at every pore, to be possessed of a devil that robs you of your sleep and grants no space between the hours of grinding toil — I thank the saints I am a simple man!

FIAMETTA.

I grant thee thou mayst be right concerning him; he hath indeed a strange, sour mien. I shudder when he turns suddenly, as his wont is, and bends his evil eyes on me. The holy father tells me such warnings come from God. No matter how slight the service he asks of me, my flesh creeps and my limbs refuse to move, till I have whispered an Ave. But what of Lady Maria-Rosa? Both heaven and earth smile upon her. To-night she wears a poor girl's dowry, a separate fortune, on her head, her neck, her hands, yes, on her little jeweled feet. One

tiny shoe of hers would make me free to wed my lad.

LUCA.

If he have but eyes, I warrant thee he finds jewels enough in thy bright face. Tell me his name.

FIAMETTA.

Nay, that is my secret.

LUCA.

He must be a poor-souled lad if he will wait till thou hast earned a dowry.

FIAMETTA.

A poor-souled lad! my good Vicenzo — ah! but no matter; thou knowest him, Luca, my Lord Lorenzo's page. There! — is he poor, or mean, or plain, or dull? He claims no dowry, he — but I have my pride, as well as great ones.

LUCA.

May the saints preserve thee from such as theirs! I am heartily glad of thy good fortune. I am not sure whether thou or Lady Maria-Rosa be the most favored. Well, the end proves all. [*Exeunt.*

Enter on one side ANNICCA *and* DON TOMMASO, *attired for the ball; on the other side,* RIBERA.

RIBERA.

What do ye here, my children? Haste away!
Maria waits you for the ball; folk say
'T will be the bravest show e'er seen in Naples.
I warrant you the Spagnoletto brings
The richest jewels — what say'st thou, my son?

DON TOMMASO.

I who have robbed you of one gem, need scarce
Re-word, sir, how I prize it.

RIBERA.

Why, 't is true.
Robbed me, thou sayst? So hast thou. She was mine —
The balanced beauty of her flesh and spirit,
That was my garland, and I was her all,
Till thou, a stranger, stole her heart's allegiance,
Suborned — Forgive me, I am old, a father,
Whose doting passions blind. I am not jealous,
Believe me, sir. When we Riberas give,
We give without retraction or reserve,
Were it our life-blood. I rejoice with thee
That she is thine; nor am I quite bereft,
I have some treasure still. I do repent
So heartily of my discourteous speech,
That I will crave your leave before I kiss
Your wife's soft palm.

ANNICCA (*kissing him repeatedly*).

Why, father, what is this?
Can Don Tommaso's wife so soon forget
She is the Spagnoletto's child?

RIBERA.

Enough.
I can bear praise, thou knowest, from all save thee
And my Maria. My grave son, I fear,
Will mock these transports. Pray go in with me.
No one of us but has this night a triumph.
Let us make ready. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Ball in the Palace of DON JOHN. *Dance.* DON JOHN *and* MARIA *together.* DON TOMMASO, ANNICCA. LORDS *and* LADIES, *dancing or promenading.*

1ST LORD.

Were it not better to withdraw awhile,
After our dance, unto the torch-lit gardens?
The air is fresh and sweet without.

1ST LADY.

Nay, signor.
I like this heavy air, rich with warm odors,
The broad, clear light, the many-colored throng.
I might have breathed on mine own balcony
The evening breeze.

1ST LORD.

Still at cross purposes.
When will you cease to flout me?

1ST LADY.

When I prize
A lover's sigh more dear than mine own pleasure.
See, the Signora Julia passed again.
She is far too pale for so much white, I find.
Donna Aurora — ah, how beautiful!
That spreading ruff, sprinkled with seeds of gold,
Becomes her well. Would you believe it, sir,
Folk say her face is twin to mine — what think you?

1ST LORD.

For me, the huge earth holds but one such face.
You know it well.

1ST LADY.

The hall is over-filled;
Go we without. [*They pass on.*

2D LADY.

Thrice he hath danced with her.
She is not one of us — her face is strange;
Colored and carven to meet most men's desire —
Is 't not, my lord? Certes, it loses naught
For lack of ornament. Pray, ask her name,
If but for my sake.

2D LORD.

I have already asked.
She is the daughter to the Spagnoletto,
Maria-Rosa.

2D LADY.

Ah, I might have guessed.
The form and face are matched with the apparel,
As in a picture. 'T was the master's hand,
I warrant you, arranged with such quaint art,
Such seeming-careless care, the dead, white pearls
Within her odd, bright hair. [*They pass on.*

DON JOHN.

Now hope, now fear
Reigned lord of my wild dreams. One name still sang
Like the repeated strain of some caged bird,
Its sweet, persistent music through my brain.
One vanishing face upon the empty air
Shone forth and faded night and day. And you,

Did you not find me hasty, over-bold?
Nay, tell me all your thought.

MARIA.

You know, my lord,
I am no courtier, and belike my thought
Might prove too rustic for a royal ear.

DON JOHN.

Speak on, speak on!
Though you should rail, your voice would still outsing
Rebeck and mandoline.

MARIA.

Is it not strange?
I knew you not, albeit I might have guessed,
If only from the simple garb of black,
And golden collar, 'midst the motley hues
Of our gay nobles. I know not what besides,
But this first won me. Be not angered, sir;
But, as I looked, I never ranked you higher
Than simple gentleman. I asked your name;
Then, when your Highness stooped to pick my flower,
My lord, that moment was my thought a traitor,
For it had fain discrowned you.

DON JOHN.

May God's angels
Reward such treason. Say me those words again.

Let the rich blush born of that dear confession
Again dye cheek and brow, and fade and melt
Forever, even as then.

MARIA.

We are watched, my lord.
This is no place, no hour, for words like these.

DON JOHN.

When, where then, may we meet?

[*They pass on.*

SCENE II.

The Palace Gardens. Interrupted sounds of music and revelry come through the open windows of the ball-room, seen in the background. RIBERA, *pacing the stage, occasionally pausing to look in upon the dancers.*

RIBERA.

This is revenge. Is she not beautiful,
Ye gods? The beggar's child matched with a prince!
Throb not so high, my heart, 'neath envious eyes
Fixed on thy triumph! Now am I well repaid
For my slow, martyred years. Was I not wrung
By keener tortures than my savage brush,
Though dipped in my heart's blood, might reproduce!

No twisted muscle, no contorted limb,
No agony of flesh, have I yet drawn,
That owed not its suggestion to some pang
Of my pride crucified, my spirit racked,
My entrails gnawed by the blind worm of hate,
Engendered of oppression. That is past,
But not forgotten; though to-night I please
To yield to gentler influence, to own
The strength of beauty and the power of joy,
And welcome gracious phantasies that throng
And hover over me in airy shapes.
The spirits of earth and heaven contend to-night
For mastery within me; ne'er before
Have I been more the seer to whom God opes
His cherub-guarded portals; ne'er before
Have I been more the Spagnoletto, fired
With noble wrath, with the consuming fever
And fierce delight of vengeance.
From this point
I see her clearly — the auroral face
A-light with smiles, the imperial head upraised;
Her languid hand sways the broad, silken fan,
Whose wing-like movement stirs above her brow
The fine, bright curls, as though warm airs of heaven
Around her breathed. He leads her 'midst the throng.
So, they have gone; but I will follow them,
And watch them from afar. [*Exit.*

Enter from the opposite side DON JOHN *and* MARIA.

DON JOHN.

I dread to ask
What quivers on my lips. My heart is free,
But thine?

MARIA.

My heart is free, my lord.

DON JOHN.

Thank God!

MARIA.

It never beat less calmly at the sound
Of any voice till now. I laugh to think
This very morn I fancied it had met
Its master.

DON JOHN.

Ah!

MARIA.

Fear naught — a simple boy,
A pupil of my father's.

DON JOHN.

I was mad
To dream it could be otherwise. Forgive me;
I, a mere stranger in thy life, am jealous
Of all thy present and thy past.

MARIA.

Listen, my lord;
You shall hear all. What hour, think you, he chose
To urge his cause? The same wherein I learned
Your Highness had commanded for to-night
Our presence. My winged thoughts were flying back
To Count Lodovico's; again I saw you,
My white rose at your lips, your grave eyes fixed
Most frankly, yet most reverently, on mine.
Again my heart sank as I heard the name,
The Prince of Austria; and while I mused,
He spake of love. Oh, I am much to blame!
My mood was soft; — although I promised naught,
I listened, yea, I listened. Good, my lord,
Do you not pity him?

DON JOHN.

Thanks, and thanks again,
For thy confession! Now no spot remains
On the unblemished mirror of my faith.
Since that dear night, I with one only thought
Have gained the sum of knowledge and opinions
Touching thine honored father, with such scraps
As the gross public voice could dole to me
Concerning thine own far-removed, white life.
Thou art, I learn, immured in close seclusion;

Thy father, be it with all reverence said,
Hedges with jealous barriers his treasure;
Whilst thou, most duteous, tenderest of daughters,
Breath'st but for him.

MARIA.

Dear father! Were it so,
'T were simple justice. Ah, if you knew him —
A proud, large, tameless heart. This is the cloister
Where he immures me — Naples' gayest revels;
The only bar wherewith he hedges me
Is his unbounded trust, that leaves me free.
Let us go in; the late night air is chill.

DON JOHN.

Yet one more dance?

MARIA.

You may command, my lord. [*Exeunt.*

Enter RIBERA.

RIBERA.

I lost them in the press. Ah, there they dance
Again together. I would lay my hands
In blessing on that darling, haughty head.
Like the Ribera's child, she bears her honors
As lightly as a flower. Yet there glows
Unwonted lustre in her starry eyes,

And richer beauty blushes on her cheek.
Enough. Now must I strive to fix that form
That haunts my brain — the blind, old Count Camillo,
The Prince's oracle. 'Midst the thick throng
My fancy singled him; white beard, white hair,
Sealed eyes, and brow lit by an inward light.
So will I paint mine Isaac blessing Esau,
While Jacob kneels before him — blind, betrayed
By his own flesh!

As RIBERA *stands aside, lost in thought, enter* DON JOHN *and* MARIA.

MARIA.

See, the impatient day
Wakes in the east.

DON JOHN.

One moment here, signora,
Breathe we the charm of this enchanted night.
Look where behind yon vines the slow moon sets,
Hidden from us, while every leaf hangs black,
Each tender stalk distinct, each curling edge
Against the silver sky.

MARIA (*perceiving* RIBERA).

What, father! here?

RIBERA.

Maria! — Ah, my Prince, I crave your pardon.
When thus I muse, 't is but my mind that lives;
Each outward sense is dead. I saw you not,
I heard nor voice nor footstep. Yonder lines
That streak the brightening east warn us away.
For all your grace to us, the Spagnoletto
Proffers his thanks to John of Austria.
My daughter, art thou ready?

DON JOHN.

I am bound,
Illustrious signor, rather unto you
And the signora, past all hope of payment.
When may I come to tender my poor homage
To the Sicilian master?

RIBERA.

My lord will jest.
Our house is too much honored when he deigns
O'erstep the threshold. Let your royal pleasure
Alone decide the hour.

DON JOHN.

To-morrow, then.
Or I should say to-day, for dawn is nigh.

RIBERA.

And still we trespass. Be it as you will;
We are your servants.

MARIA.

So, my lord, good-night.

[*Exeunt* MARIA *and* RIBERA.

DON JOHN (*alone*).

Gods, what a haughty devil rules that man!
As though two equal princes interchanged
Imperial courtesies! The Spagnoletto
Thanks John of Austria! Louis of France
Might so salute my father. By heavens, I know not
What patience or what reverence withheld
My enchafed spirit in bounds of courtesy.
Nay, it was she, mine angel, whose mere aspect
Is balm and blessing. How her love-lit eyes
Burned through my soul! How her soft hand's slight pressure
Tingled along my veins! Oh, she is worthy
A heart's religion! How shall I wear the hours
Ere I may seek her? Lo, I stand and dream,
While my late guests await me. Patience, patience! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Morning twilight in RIBERA'S *Garden. During this Scene the day gradually breaks, and at the close the full light of morning illuminates the stage.* LORENZO.

AUBADE.

LORENZO (*sings*).

From thy poppied sleep awake ;
  From thy golden dreams arise ;
Earth and seas new colors take,
  Love-light dawns in rosy skies,
Weird night's fantastic shadows are outworn ;
Why tarriest thou, oh, sister to the morn ?

Hearken, love ! the matin choir
  Of birds salutes thee, and with these
Blends the voice of my desire.
  Unto no richer promises
Of deeper, dearer, holier love than mine,
Canst thou awaken from thy dreams divine.

Lo, thine eastern windows flame,
  Brightening with the brightened sky ;
Rise, and with thy beauty shame
  Morning's regal pageantry,
To thrill and bless as the reviving sun,
For my heart gropes in doubt, though night be gone.

(*He speaks.*) Why should I fear? Her soul is
  pledged to mine,
Albeit she still withheld the binding word.

How long hath been the night! but morn
breathes hope.
"*I fain were true to you and to myself*" —
Did she say thus? or is my fevered brain
The fool of its desires? The whole world swam;
The blood rang beating in mine ears and roared
Like rushing waters; yet, as through a dream,
I saw her dimly. Surely on her lids
Shone the clear tears. As there 's a God in
heaven,
She spake those words! My lips retain the
touch
Of those soft, snow-cold hands, neither refused
Nor proffered. Such things *are*, nor can they be
Forgotten or foreknown. Yes, she is mine.
But soft! Her casement opes. Oh, joy, 't is she!
Pale, in a cloud of white she stands and drinks
The morning sunlight.

MARIA (*above at the window*).

Ah, how sweet this air
Kisses my sleepless lids and burning temples.
I am not weary, though I found no rest.
My spirit leaps within me; a new glory
Blesses the dear, familiar scene — ripe orchard,
Garden and grove, and glimmering gulf beyond;
The same — yet oh, how different! Even I
thought
Soft music trembled on the listening air,
As though a harp were touched, blent with low
song.

Sure, that was phantasy. I will descend,
Visit my flowers, and see whereon the dew
Hangs heaviest, and what fairest bud hath bloomed
Since yester-eve. Why should I court repose
And dull forgetfulness, while the large earth
Wakes to no lesser joy than mine?

[*Exit from above.*

LORENZO.

Oh, heart!
How may my breast contain thee, with thy burden
Of too much happiness?

Enter MARIA *below;* LORENZO *springs forward to greet her; she shrinks back in a sort of terror.*

LORENZO.

Good-day, sweet mistress.
May the blithe spirit of this auspicious morn
Become the genius of thy days to come,
Whereof be none less beautiful than this.
Why art thou silent? Does not love inspire
Joyous expression, be it but a sigh,
A song, a smile, a broken word, a cry?
Thou hast not granted me the promised pledge
For which I hunger still. I would confirm
With dear avowals, frequent seals of love,
That which, though sure, I yet can scarce believe.

MARIA.

Somewhat too sure, I think, my lord Lorenzo.
I scarce deemed possible that one so shy
But yester-morn should hold so high a mien,
Claiming what ne'er was given.

LORENZO.

Maria!

MARIA.

Sir,
You are a trifle bold to speak my name
Familiarly as no man, save my father
Or my own brother, dares.

LORENZO.

Ah, now I see
Your jest. You will not seem so lightly won
Without a wooing? You will feign disdain,
Only to make more sweet your rich concession?
Too late — I heard it all. "*A new light shines*
On the familiar scene." What may that be,
Save the strange splendor of the dawn of love?
Nay, darling, cease to jest, lest my poor heart,
Hanging 'twixt hell and heaven, in earnest break.

MARIA.

Here is no jest, sir, but a fatal error,
Crying for swift correction. You surprise me

With rude impatience, ere I have found time
To con a gentle answer. Pardon me
If any phrase or word or glance of mine
Hath bred or nourished in your heart a hope
That you might win my love. It cannot be.

LORENZO.

A word, a glance! Why, the whole frozen statue
Warmed into life. Surely it was not you.
You must have bribed some angel with false prayers
To wear your semblance — nay, no angel served,
But devilish witchcraft —

MARIA.

Sir, enough, enough!
I hoped to find here peace and solitude.
These lacking, I retire. Farewell.

[*Going toward the house.*

LORENZO.

Signora,
I will not rob you of your own. Farewell to you.

[*Exit.*

MARIA.

Where have you flown, bright dreams? Has that rude hand
Sufficed to dash to naught your frail creations?
Sad thoughts and humors black now fill my soul.

So his rough foot hath bruised the dewy grass,
And left it sere. Why should his harsh words
touch me?
The truth of yesterday is false to-day.
How could I know, dear God! How might I
guess
The bitter sweetness, the delicious pain!
A new heart fills my breast, as soft and weak
And melting as a tear, unto its lord;
But kindled with quick courage to endure,
If I need front for him, a world of foes.
If this be love, ah, what a hell is theirs
Who suffer without hope! Even I, who hold
So many dear assurances, who hear
Still ringing in mine ears such sacred vows,
Am haunted with an unaccustomed doubt,
Not wonted to go hand-in-hand with joy.
A gloomy omen greets me with the morn;
I, who recoil from pain, must strike and wound.
What may this mean? Help me, ye saints of
heaven
And holy mother, for my strength is naught!

She falls on her knees and bursts into tears. *Reënter* LORENZO.

LORENZO (*aside*).

Thank heaven, I came. How have I wrung her
soul!
A noble love, forsooth! A blind, brute passion,
That being denied, is swift transformed to hate
No whit more cruel. (*To Maria.*) Lady!

MARIA (*rising hastily*).

Signor Lorenzo!
Again what would you with me?

LORENZO.

No such suit
As late I proffered, but your gracious pardon.

MARIA.

Rise, sir, forgiven. I, too, have been to blame,
Although less deeply than you deemed. Forbear
To bind your life. I feel myself unworthy
Of that high station where your thoughts enthrone me.
Yet I dare call myself your friend.

[*Offering him her hand, which* LORENZO *presses to his lips.*

LORENZO.

Thanks, thanks!
Be blessed, and farewell. [*Exit.*

Enter RIBERA, *calling.*

Daughter! Maria!

MARIA.

Why, father, I am here (*kissing him*). Good-day. What will you?

RIBERA.

Darling, no more than what I always will.
Before I enter mine own world removed,
I fain would greet the dearest work of God.
I missed you when I rose. I sought you first
In your own chamber, where the lattice, oped,
Let in the morning splendor and the smells
Of the moist garden, with the sound of voices.
I looked, I found you here — but not alone.
What man was that went from you?

MARIA.

Your disciple,
My lord Lorenzo. You remember, father,
How yester-morn I pleaded for his work;
Thus he, through gratitude and — love, hath watched
All night within our garden, while I danced;
And when I came to nurse my flowers — he spake.

RIBERA.

And you?

MARIA.

Am I not still beside you, father?
I will not leave you.

RIBERA.

Ah, mine angel-child!
I cannot choose but dread it, though I wait
Expectant of the hour when you fulfil
Your woman's destiny. You have full freedom;
Yet I rejoice at this reprieve, and thank thee
For thy brave truthfulness. Be ever thus,
Withholding naught from him whose heart reflects
Only thine image. Thou art still my pride,
Even as last night when all eyes gazed thy way,
Thy bearing equal in disdainful grace
To his who courted thee — thy sovereign's son.

MARIA.

Yea, so? And yet it was not pride I felt,
Nor consciousness of self, nor vain delight
In the world's envy; — something more than these,
Far deeper, sweeter — What have I said? My brain
Is dull with sleep. 'T is only now I feel
The weariness of so much pleasure.

RIBERA (*rising*).

Well,
Go we within. Yes, I am late to work;
We squander precious moments. Thou, go rest,
And waken with fresh roses in thy cheeks,
To greet our royal guest. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Studio of the Spagnoletto. RIBERA *before his canvas.* LUCA *in attendance.*

RIBERA (*laying aside his brush*).

So! I am weary. Luca, what 's o'clock?

LUCA.

My lord, an hour past noon.

RIBERA.

So late already!
Well, one more morning of such delicate toil
Will make it ready for Madrid, and worthy
Not merely Philip's eyes, but theirs whose glance
Outvalues a king's gaze, my noble friend
Velasquez, and the monkish Zurbaran.
Luca!

LUCA.

My lord.

RIBERA.

Hath the signora risen?

LUCA.

Fiametta passed a brief while since, and left
My lady sleeping.

RIBERA.

Good! she hath found rest;
Poor child, she sadly lacked it. She had known
'Twixt dawn and dawn no respite from emotion;
Her chill hand fluttered like a bird in mine;
Her soft brow burned my lips. Could that boy read
The tokens of an overwearied spirit,
Strained past endurance, he had spared her still,
At any cost of silence. What is such love
To mine, that would outrival Roman heroes —
Watch mine arm crisp and shrivel in quick flame,
Or set a lynx to gnaw my heart away,
To save her from a needle-prick of pain,
Ay, or to please her? At their worth she rates
Her wooers — light as all-embracing air
Or universal sunshine. Luca, go
And tell Fiametta — rather, bid the lass
Hither herself. [*Exit* LUCA.
He comes to pay me homage,
As would his royal father, if he pleased
To visit Naples; yet she too shall see him.
She is part of all I think, of all I am;
She is myself, no less than yon bright dream
Fixed in immortal beauty on the canvas.

Enter FIAMETTA.

FIAMETTA.

My lord, you called me?

RIBERA.

When thy mistress wakes,
Array her richly, that she be prepared
To come before the Prince.

FIAMETTA.

Sir, she hath risen,
And only waits me with your lordship's leave,
To cross the street unto St. Francis' church.

RIBERA (*musingly*).

With such slight escort? Nay, this troubles me.
Only the Strada's width? The saints forbid
That I should thwart her holy exercise!
Myself will go. I cannot. Bid her muffle,
Like our Valencian ladies, her silk mantle
About her face and head.

[*At a sign from* RIBERA, *exit* FIAMETTA.

Yes, God will bless her.
What should I fear? I will make sure her beauty
Is duly masked. [*He goes toward the casement.*
Ay, there she goes — the mantle,
Draped round the stately head, discloses naught
Save the live jewel of the eye. Unless one guessed
From the majestic grace and proud proportions,
She might so pass through the high thoroughfares.
Ah, one thick curl escapes from its black prison.

Alone in Naples, wreathed with rays of gold,
Her crown of light betrays her. So, she 's safe!

Enter LUCA.

LUCA.

A noble gentleman of Spain awaits
The master's leave to enter.

RIBERA.

Show him in.

[*Exit* LUCA. RIBERA *draws the curtain before his picture of "Jacob's Dream."*

RIBERA.

A gentleman of Spain! Perchance the Prince
Sends couriers to herald his approach,
Or craves a longer grace.

Enter LUCA, *ushering in* DON JOHN *unattended, completely enveloped in a Spanish mantle, which he throws off, his face almost hidden by a cavalier's hat. He uncovers his head on entering.* RIBERA, *repressing a movement of surprise, hastens to greet him and kisses his hand.*

RIBERA.

Welcome, my lord!
I am shamed to think my sovereign's son should wait,
Through a churl's ignorance, without my doors.

DON JOHN.

Dear master, blame him not. I came attended
By one page only. Here I blush to claim
Such honor as depends on outward pomp.
No royalty is here, save the crowned monarch
Of our Sicilian artists. Be it mine
To press with reverent lips my master's hand.

RIBERA.

Your Highness is too gracious; if you glance
Round mine ill-furnished studio, my works
Shall best proclaim me and my poor deserts.
Luca, uplift yon hangings.

DON JOHN (*seating himself*).

Sir, you may sit.

RIBERA (*aside, seating himself slowly*).

Curse his swollen arrogance! Doth he imagine
I waited leave of him? (LUCA *uncovers the picture.*)

DON JOHN.

Oh, wonderful!
You have bettered here your best. Why, sir, he breathes!
Will not those locked lids ope? — that nerveless hand
Regain the iron strength of sinew mated
With such heroic frame? You have conspired

With Nature to produce a man. Behold,
I chatter foolish speech; for such a marvel
The fittest praise is silence.

[*He rises and stands before the picture.*

RIBERA (*after a pause*).

I am glad
Your Highness deigns approve. Lose no more time,
Lest the poor details should repay you not.
Unto your royal home 't will follow you,
Companion, though unworthy, to the treasures
Of the Queen's gallery.

DON JOHN.

'T is another jewel
Set in my father's crown, and, in his name,
I thank you for it.

[RIBERA *bows silently.* DON JOHN *glances around the studio.*

DON JOHN.

There hangs a quaint, strong head,
Though merely sketched. What a marked, cunning leer
Grins on the wide mouth! what a bestial glance!

RIBERA.

'T is but a slight hint for my larger work,
"Bacchus made drunk by Satyrs."

DON JOHN.

Where is that?
I ne'er have seen the painting.

RIBERA.

'T is not in oils,
But etched in aqua-fortis. Luca, fetch down
Yonder portfolio. I can show your Highness
The graven copy.

[LUCA *brings forward a large portfolio.* RIBERA *looks hastily over the engravings and draws one out, which he shows* DON JOHN.

DON JOHN.

Ah, most admirable!
I know not who is best portrayed — the god,
Plump, reeling, wreathed with vine, in whom abides
Something Olympian still, or the coarse Saytrs,
Thoroughly brutish. Here I scarcely miss,
So masterly the grouping, so distinct
The bacchanalian spirit, your rich brush,
So vigorous in color. Do you find
The pleasure in this treatment equals that
Of the oil painting?

RIBERA.

All is in my mood;
We have so many petty talents, clever

To mimic Nature's surface. I name not
The servile copyists of the greater masters,
Or of th' archangels, Raphael and Michael;
But such as paint our cheap and daily marvels.
Sometimes I fear lest they degrade our art
To a nice craft for plodding artisans —
Mere realism, which they mistake for truth.
My soul rejects such limits. The true artist
Gives Nature's best effects with far less means.
Plain black and white suffice him to express
A finer grace, a stronger energy
Than she attains with all the aid of color.
I argue thus and work with simple tools,
Like the Greek fathers of our art — the sculptors,
Who wrought in white alone their matchless types.
Then dazzled by the living bloom of earth,
Glowing with color, I return to that,
My earliest worship, and compose such work
As you see there. [*Pointing to the picture.*

DON JOHN.

Would it be overmuch,
In my brief stay in Naples, to beg of you
A portrait of myself in aqua-fortis?
'T would rob you, sir, of fewer golden hours
Than the full-colored canvas, and enrich
With a new treasure our royal gallery.

RIBERA.

You may command my hours and all that 's
mine.

DON JOHN (*rising*).

Thanks, generous master. When may I return
For the first sitting?

RIBERA.

I am ready now —
To-day, to-morrow — when your Highness please.

DON JOHN.

'T would be abuse of goodness to accept
The present moment. I will come to-morrow,
At the same hour, in some more fitting garb.
Your hand, sir, and farewell. Salute for me,
I pray you, the signora. May I not hope
To see and thank her for her grace to me,
In so adorning my poor feast?

RIBERA.

The debt is ours.
She may be here to-morrow — she is free,
She only, while I work, to come and go.
Pray, sir, allow her — she is never crossed.
I stoop to beg for her — she is the last
Who bides with me — I crave your pardon, sir;
What should this be to you?

DON JOHN.

'T is much to me,
Whose privilege has been in this rare hour,
Beneath the master to discern the man,
And thus add friendship unto admiration.

[*He presses* RIBERA'S *hand and is about to pick up his mantle and hat.* LUCA *springs forward, and, while he is throwing the cloak around the Prince's shoulders, enter hastily* MARIA, *enveloped in her mantilla, as she went to church.*

MARIA.

Well, father, am I veiled and swathed to suit you,
To cross the Strada?

[*She throws off her mantilla and appears all in white. She goes to embrace her father, when she suddenly perceives the Prince, and stands speechless and blushing.*

RIBERA.

Child, his Royal Highness
Prince John of Austria.

DON JOHN.

Good-day, signora.
Already twice my gracious stars have smiled.
I saw you in the street. You wore your mantle,
As the noon sun might wear a veil of cloud,
Covering, but not concealing.

MARIA.

I, sir, twice
Have unaware stood in your royal presence.
You are welcome to my father's home and mine.
I scarce need crave your pardon for my entrance;
Yourself must see how well assured I felt
My father was alone.

DON JOHN.

And so you hoped
To find him — shall I read your answer thus?

RIBERA.

Nay, press her not. Your Highness does her wrong,
So harshly to construe her simpleness.
My daughter and myself are one, and both
Will own an equal pleasure if you bide.

DON JOHN (*seating himself*).

You chain me with kind words.

MARIA.

My father, sir,
Hath surely told you our delight and marvel
At the enchantments of your feast. For me
The night was brief, rich, beautiful, and strange
As a bright dream.

DON JOHN.

I will gainsay you not.
A beauteous soul can shed her proper glory
On mean surroundings. I have likewise dreamed,
Nor am I yet awake. This morn hath been
A feast for mind and eye. Yon shepherd-prince,
Whom angels visit in his sleep, shall crown
Your father's brow with a still fresher laurel,
And link in equal fame the Spanish artist
With the Lord's chosen prophet.

RIBERA.

That may be,
For in the form of that worn wayfarer
I drew myself. So have I slept beneath
The naked heavens, pillowed by a stone,
With no more shelter than the wind-stirred branches,
While the thick dews of our Valencian nights
Drenched my rude weeds, and chilled through blood and bone.
Yet to me also were the heavens revealed,
And angels visited my dreams.

DON JOHN.

How strange
That you, dear master, standing on the crown
Of a long life's continuous ascent,
Should backward glance unto such dark beginnings.

RIBERA.

Obscure are all beginnings. Yet I muse
With pleasing pain on those fierce years of struggle.
They were to me my birthright; all the vigor,
The burning passion, the unflinching truth,
My later pencil gained, I gleaned from them.
I prized them. I reclaimed their ragged freedom,
Rather than hold my seat, a liveried slave,
At the rich board of my Lord Cardinal.
A palace was a prison till I reared
Mine own. But now my child's heart I would pierce
Sooner than see it bear the least of ills,
Such as I then endured.

DON JOHN.

Donna Maria
May smile, sir, at your threat; she is in a pleasance,
Where no rude breezes blow, no shadow falls
Darker than that of cool and fragrant leaves.
Yea, were it otherwise — had you not reaped
The fruit of your own works, she had not suffered.
Your children are Spain's children.

RIBERA.

Sir, that word
Is the most grateful you have spoken yet.
Why art thou silent, daughter?

MARIA (*absently*).

What should I say?
The Prince is kind. I scarcely heard your words.
I listened to your voices, and I mused.

DON JOHN (*rising*).

I overstep your patience.

MARIA.

You will be gone?
What have I said?

RIBERA.

You are a child, Maria.
To-morrow I will wait your Highness.

DON JOHN.

Thanks.
To-morrow noon. Farewell, signora.
[*Exit* DON JOHN.

RIBERA.

What ails you, daughter? You forget yourself.
Your tongue cleaves to your mouth. You sit and muse,

A statue of white silence. Twice to-day
You have deeply vexed me. Go not thus again
Across the street with that light child, Fiametta.
Faith, you were closely muffled. What was this —
This tell-tale auburn curl that rippled down
Over the black mantilla? Were I harsh,
Suspicious, jealous, fearful, prone to wrath,
Or anything of all that I am not,
I should have deemed it no mere negligence,
But a bold token.

MARIA.

Father you make me quail.
Why do you threat me with such evil eyes?
Would they could read my heart!

RIBERA.

Elude me not.
Whom have you met beside the Prince this morn?
Who saw you pass? Whom have you spoken with?

MARIA.

For God's sake, father, what strange thoughts are these?
With none, with none! Beside the Prince, you say?
Why even him I saw not, as you know.
I hastened with veiled eyes cast on the ground,
Swathed in my mantle still, I told my beads,
And in like manner hasted home to you.

RIBERA.

Well, it may pass; but henceforth say thy matins
In thine own room. I know not what vague cloud
Obscures my sight and weighs upon my brain.
I am very weary. Luca, follow me.

[*Exeunt* RIBERA *and* LUCA.

MARIA.

Poor father! Dimly he perceives some trouble
Within the threatening air. Thank heaven, I calmed him,
Yet I spake truth. What could have roused so soon
His quick suspicion? Did Fiametta see
The wary page slip in my hand the missive,
As we came forth again? Nay, even so,
My father hath not spoken with her since.
Sure he knows naught; 't is but my foolish fear
Makes monsters out of shadows. I may read
The priceless lines and grave them on my heart.

[*She draws from her bosom a letter, reads it, and presses it to her lips.*

He loves me, yes, he loves me! Oh, my God,
This awful joy in mine own breast is love!
To-night he will await me in our garden.
Oh, for a word, a pressure of the hand!
I fly, my prince, at thy most dear behest!

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A room in DON TOMMASO'S *house.* DON TOMMASO *and* ANNICCA.

DON TOMMASO.

Truly, you wrong your sister; she is young,
Heedless, and wilful, that is all; a touch
Of the Ribera's spirit fired the lass.
Don John was but her weapon of revenge
Against the malice of our haughty matrons,
Who hurled their icy shafts of scorn from heights
Of dignity upon the artist's daughter.

ANNICCA.

I cannot think with you. In her demeanor,
Her kindled cheek, her melting eye, was more
Than sly revenge or cautious policy.
If that was art, it overreached itself.
Ere the night ended, I had blushed to see
Slighting regards cast on my father's child,
And hear her name and his tossed lightly round.

DON TOMMASO.

Could you not read in such disparagement
The envy of small natures?

ANNICCA.

I had as lief
Maria were to dance the tarantella

Upon the quay at noonday, as to see her
Gazed at again with such insulting homage.

DON TOMMASO.

You are too strict; your baseless apprehensions
Wrong her far more than strangers' jests.

ANNICCA.

Not so;
My timely fears prevent a greater ill
And work no harm, since they shall be imparted
Only to him who hath the power to quell them,
Dissolving them to air — my father.

DON TOMMASO.

How!
You surely will not rouse his fatal wrath?
Annicca, listen: if your doubts were true,
He whose fierce love guards her with sleepless eyes,
More like the passion of some wild, dumb creature,
With prowling jealousy and deadly spring,
Forth leaping at the first approach of ill,
Than the calm tenderness of human fathers;
He surely had been keen to scent the danger.
I saw him at the ball — as is his wont,
He mingled not among the revellers,
But like her shadow played the spy on her.

ANNICCA.

A word would stir less deeply than you dread.

DON TOMMASO.

Ah, there you err; he knows no middle term.
At once he would accept as fact the worst
Of your imaginings; his rage would smite
All near him, and rebound upon himself;
For, as I learn, Don John brings royal orders
For the Queen's gallery; he would dismiss
The Prince as roughly as a begging artist.
Make no such breach just now betwixt the court
And our own kindred.

ANNICCA.

Be it so, Tommaso.
I will do naught in haste.

DON TOMMASO.

Watch thou and wait.
A slight reproof might now suffice the child,
Tame as a bird unto a gentle voice.

ANNICCA.

My mind misgives me; yet will I find patience.

SCENE III.

Night in RIBERA'S *Garden.* DON JOHN *alone.*

DON JOHN.

In any less than she, so swift a passion,
So unreserved, so reckless, had repelled.
In her 't is godlike. Our mutual love
Was born full-grown, as we gazed each on each.
Nay, 't was not born, but like a thing eternal,
It *was* ere we had consciousness thereof;
No growth of slow development, but perfect
From the beginning, neither doomed to end.
Her garden breathes her own warm, southern
beauty,
Glowing with dewy and voluptuous bloom.
Here I am happy — happy to dream and wait
In rich security of bliss. I know
How brief an interval divides us now.
She hastes to meet me with no less impatience
Than mine to clasp her in my arms, to press
Heart unto heart, and see the love within
The unfathomable depths of her great eyes.
She comes. Maria!

Enter MARIA, *half timid, half joyous.*

MARIA.

My lord! you have been waiting?

DON JOHN.

Darling, not long; 't was but my restless love
That drove me here before the promised hour.
So were I well content to wait through ages
Upon the threshold of a joy like this,
Knowing the gates of heaven might ope to me
At any moment.

MARIA.

Your love is less than mine,
For I have counted every tedious minute
Since our last meeting.

DON JOHN.

I had rather speak
Less than the truth to have you chide me thus;
Yet if you enter in the lists with me,
Faith matched with faith, and loyal heart with heart,
I warrant you, the jealous god of love,
Who spies us now from yon pomegranate bush,
Would crown me victor.

MARIA.

Why should we compete?
Who could decide betwixt two equal truths,
Two perfect faiths?

DON JOHN.

The worship of my life
Will be slight payment for your boundless trust.
Look we nor forth nor back, are we not happy?
Heaven smiles above our heads with all her stars.
The envious day forced us apart, the wing
Of obscure night protects and shelters us.
Now like a pure, night-blooming flower, puts forth
The perfect blossom of our love. Oh, lean
Thy royal head upon my breast; assure me
That this unheard-of bliss is no fond dream.
Cling to me, darling, till thy love's dear burden
Take root about my heart-strings.

MARIA (*after a pause*).

Did you not hear
A sound, a cry? Oh, God! was it my father?

DON JOHN.

Naught save the beating of our hearts I heard.
Be calm, my love; the very air is hushed.
Listen, the tinkle of the fountain yonder,
The sleepy stir of leaves, the querulous pipe
Of some far bird — no more.

MARIA.

I heard, I heard!
A rude voice called me. Wherefore did it come

To snatch me from that dream of restful love?
Oh, Juan, you will save me, you will help, —
Tell me you will — I have lost all for you!

DON JOHN.

To-morrow you will laugh at fears like these.
You have lost naught — you have but won my love.
Lose not your faith in that — your shield and weapon.

MARIA.

I tremble still in every limb. Good-night,
I must be gone. To-morrow when you come,
Be wary with my father; he is fierce
In love and hatred. Listen and look, my lord.
If one dared say to me but yester-morn
That I would meet at night a stranger youth
In mine own garden, talk with him of love,
And hint a thought against the Spagnoletto,
I had smitten with this bauble such a one.
[*Pointing to a jewelled poniard in her belt.*
Kiss me, my Juan, once again. Good-night.
[*Exit* MARIA.

SCENE IV.

The Studio. RIBERA *and* ANNICCA.

ANNICCA.

Has he come often?

RIBERA.

Nay, I caught the trick
Of his fair face in some half-dozen sittings.
His is a bold and shapely head — it pleased me.
I like the lad ; the work upon his portrait
Was pastime — 't is already nigh complete.

ANNICCA.

And has Maria sat here while you worked ?

RIBERA (*sharply*).

Why not? What would'st thou say? Speak, fret me not
With ticklish fears. Is she not by my side,
For work or rest ?

ANNICCA.

Surely, I meant no harm.
Father, how quick you are ! I had but asked
If she, being here, had seen the work progress,
And found it his true counterpart.

RIBERA.

Annicca,
There is something in your thought you hold from me.
Have the lewd, prying eyes, the slanderous mind
Of public envy, spied herein some mischief ?
What hast thou heard ? By heaven, if one foul word

Have darkened the fair fame of my white dove,
Naples shall rue it. Let them not forget
The chapel of Saint Januarius!

ANNICCA (*aside*).

Tommaso judged aright. I dare not tell him.
Dear father, listen. Pray, be calm. Sit down;
Your own hot rage engenders in my mind
Thoughts, fears, suspicions.

RIBERA (*seating himself*).

You are right, Annicca.
I am foolish, hasty; but it makes me mad.
Listen to me. Here sits the Prince before me;
We talk, we laugh. We have discussed all themes,
From the great Angelo's divinity,
Down to the pest of flies that fret us here
At the day's hottest. Sometimes he will pace
The studio — such young blood is seldom still.
He brought me once his mandoline, and drew
Eloquent music thence. I study thus
The changeful play of soul. I catch the spirit
Behind the veil, and burn it on the plate.
Maria comes and goes — will sit awhile
Over her broidery, then will haste away
And serve us with a dish of golden fruit.
That is for me; she knows the sweet, cool juice,
After long hours of work, refreshes me
More than strong wine. She meets his Royal Highness

As the Ribera's child should meet a Prince —
Nor overbold, nor timid; one would think
Their rank was equal, and that neither sprang
From less than royal lineage.

ANNICCA.

Why, I know it.
Here is no need to excuse or justify.
Speak rather of your work — is the plate finished?

RIBERA.

So nigh, that were Don John to leave to-morrow,
It might go with him.

ANNICCA.

What! he leaves Naples?

RIBERA.

Yea, but I know not when; he seems to wait
Momently, orders from his Majesty
To travel onward.

ANNICCA (*aside*).

Would he were well away!

RIBERA.

What do you mutter? I grow deaf this side.

ANNICCA.

I spake not, father. I regret with you
The Prince should leave us; you have more enjoyed
His young companionship than any stranger's
These many years.

RIBERA.

Well, well, enough of him.
He hath a winning air — so far, so good.
I know not that I place more trust in him
Than in another. 'T is a lying world;
I am too old now to be duped or dazzled
By fair externals.

Enter MARIA, *carrying a kirtle full of flowers.*

MARIA.

Father, see! my roses
Have blossomed over night; I bring you some
To prank your study. Sister, Don Tommaso
Seeks you below.

ANNICCA (*rising*).

I will go meet him. Father,
Until to-morrow. [*Embraces* RIBEBA *and exit.*

[MARIA *sits by her father's side and displays her flowers.*

RIBERA.

Truly, a gorgeous show!
Pink, yellow, crimson, white — which is the fairest?
Those with the deepest blush should best become you —
Nay, they accord not with your hair's red gold;
The white ones suit you best — pale, innocent,
So flowers too can lie! Is not that strange?

[MARIA *looks at him in mingled wonder and affright. He roughly brushes aside all the flowers upon the floors, then picks one up and carefully plucks it to pieces.*

I think not highly of your flowers, girl;
I have plucked this leaf by leaf; it has no heart.
See there! [*He laughs contemptuously.*

MARIA.

What have I done? Alas! what mean you?
Have you then lost your reason?

RIBERA.

Nay, but found it.
I, who was dull of wit, am keen at last.
"Don John is comely," and "Don John is kind;"
"A wonderful musician is Don John,"
"A princely artist" — and then, meek of mien,
You enter in his presence, modest, simple.
And who beneath that kitten grace had spied

The claws of mischief? Who! Why, all the world,
Save the fond, wrinkled, hoary fool, thy father.
Out, girl, for shame! He will be here anon;
Hence to your room — he shall not find you here.
Thank God, thank God! no evil hath been wrought
That may not be repaired. I have sat by
At all your meetings. You shall have no more;
Myself will look to that. Away, away!

[*Exit* MARIA.

RIBERA (*looks after her*).

As one who has received a deadly hurt,
She walks. What if my doubts be false? The terror
Of an unlooked-for blow, a treacherous thrust
When least expected — that is all she showed.
On a false charge, myself had acted thus.
She had been moved far otherwise if guilty;
She had wept, protested, begged — she had not left
With such a proud and speechless show of grief.
I was too harsh, too quick on slight suspicion.
What did Annicca say? Why, she said naught.
'T was her grave air, her sudden reticence,
Her ill-assumed indifference. They play on me;
They know me not. They dread my violent passions,
Not guessing what a firm and constant bridle

I hold them with. On just cause to be angered,
Is merely human. Yet they sound my temper;
They try to lead me like some half-tamed beast,
That must be coaxed. Well, I may laugh thereat.
But I am not myself to-day; strange pains
Shoot through my head and limbs and vex my spirit.
Oh, I have wronged my child! Return, Maria!

[*Exit, calling.*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Night. RIBERA'S *bedroom.* RIBERA *discovered in his dressing-gown, seated reading beside a table, with a light upon it. Enter from an open door at the back of the stage,* MARIA. *She stands irresolute for a moment on the threshold behind her father, watching him, passes her hand rapidly over her brow and eyes, and then knocks.*

MARIA.

May I come in, dear father?

RIBERA (*putting down his book and looking at her affectionately*).

Child, you ask?

MARIA (*advancing*).

You study late. I came to bid good-night.

RIBERA.

Poor child, thou must be weary. Thou art pale
Still from thy swoon.

MARIA (*with a forced laugh*).

I had forgotten it.
Nay, I am well again.

RIBERA.

But I forget it not,
Neither forgive myself. Well, it is past,
Enough! When the Prince left I sent for thee;
Thou wast still sleeping?

MARIA (*with confusion*).

Yes, I was outworn.
What didst thou wish of me?

RIBERA.

Merely to tell thee
Don John leaves Naples. He expressed regret
Most courteously that thou wast suffering.
He had fain offered us his parting thanks
For our kind welcome — so he deigned to say.
To-morrow he may steal a moment's grace
To see us both once more; but this is doubtful,
So he entrusted his farewells to me.

MARIA.

May peace go with him!

RIBERA.

We are well alone —
Are we not, darling? Thanks for the calm content
Wherewith thou biddest him farewell, to nestle
Once more in mine embrace. Not long, I feel,
May these old horny eyes be blest with sight
Of thy full-flowering grace, these wrinkled lips
Be pressed against thy brow. I am no more
What I have been; at times both hand and brain
Refuse their task. Myself will follow soon —
The better part of me already dead.
So the worm claims us by slow torture, child.
Thou 'lt bear with me, if as to-day I wrong
Thy gentle spirit?

MARIA.

Father, no more, no more!
You break my heart.

RIBERA.

Mine angel-child, weep not
So bitterly. I thought not thus to move thee.
Still thou art overwrought. I would have asked
At last a promise of thee. I am selfish,
But I would sleep less startingly o' nights,
And bear a calmer soul by day, were I secure
That thou wilt bide with me until the end.

[*A pause.*

To-night I will not press thee. Thou art weary;
Thy nerves have scarce regained their tension yet;
But from thy deep emotion I can see
'T will cost thee less than I have feared. To-morrow
We will talk of this again.

MARIA.

To-morrow!

RIBERA.

Now,
Good-night. 'T is time thou shouldst be sleeping.

MARIA.

Father,
I cannot leave thee! Every word of thine
Gnaws like a burning coal my sore, soft heart.
What! thou shalt suffer, and thine own Maria
Will leave thee daughterless, uncomforted?
What! thou shalt weep, and other eyes than mine
Shall see the Spagnoletto's spirit broken?

RIBERA.

There, there, poor child! Look up, cling not so wildly
About my neck. Thou art too finely touched,

If thus the faint foreshadow of a grief
Can overcome thee. Listen? What was that?

MARIA (*starts up, shudders violently, and, all at once, masters her emotion.*)

Why, I heard nothing, father.

RIBERA.

Yes, a sound
Of footsteps, and a stifled call.

[*He goes toward the casement.* MARIA *tries to detain him.*

MARIA.

Dear father,
Surely 't was naught. Your ears deceive you.
Hark,
The wind is rising, and you heard the leaves
Rustling together.

RIBERA.

Nay, I will look forth.

[*He opens the casement and looks out in silence.* MARIA *stands behind him, with her hands clasped in an agony of fear.*

RIBERA (*calling*).

Hist, answer! Who goes there? (*a pause.*) No
sound. Thou'rt right,
Maria; I see naught; our garden lies

Vacant and still, save for the swaying branches
Of bush and tree. 'T is a wild, threatening night.
A sultry breeze is blowing, and the sky
Hangs black above Vesuvius. Yonder cloud
Hath lightnings in it. Ah, a blinding bolt
Dims the volcano's pillared fire. Enough.

[*He closes the casement and returns to* MARIA.

Hark, how the thunder rolls! My child, you tremble
Like the blown leaves without.

MARIA.

I am oppressed
By the same stormy influence. Thou knowest
I dread the thunder.

RIBERA.

Thou, who art safely housed,
Why shouldst thou dread it? Try to sleep, my darling;
Forget the terror of the tempest; morn
Will break again in sunshine.

MARIA.

Father, say
You love me and you trust me once again,
Before I bid good-night.

RIBERA.

If it will calm thee,
I love thee and I trust thee. Thou art to me
My genius — thou, the breathing image still
Of thy saint-mother, whom the angels guard.
Even as thou standest now, vested in white,
With glowing eyes and pale, unsmiling face,
I see her as she stood the day her heart
Went forth from home and kin to bless the stranger
Who craved her father's alms.

MARIA.

Thanks, thanks. Good-night.
God bless us through these wild, dark hours.

RIBERA.

Good-night.

SCENE II.

RIBERA'S *Garden. Half the sky illuminated by an over-clouded moon, the rest obscured by an approaching storm. Occasional thunder and lightning. On one side of the stage a summer-house open to the audience, on the other side the exterior of the dwelling.* DON JOHN *discovered waiting near the house. The door opens, and enter* MARIA.

DON JOHN (*springing forward and embracing her*).

At last! at last!

MARIA.

Juan, beware! My father's fears,
I cannot guess by whom or what, are roused.
[*She extends her arms gropingly to embrace him.*
Oh, let me feel thee near me — I see naught.
Follow me; here our voices may be heard.
[*She hastens towards the summer-house, leaning upon his arm, and sinks upon a seat.*
Have not slow ages passed with crowding woes
Since we last met! What have I not endured!
Oh, Juan, save me!

DON JOHN.

Dearest child, be calm.
Thou art strangely overwrought. Speak not.
Await
Till this wild fear be past.

MARIA.

How great you are!
Your simple presence stills and comforts me.
While you are here, the one thing real to me
In all the universe is love.

DON JOHN.

And yet
My love is here, if I be far or nigh.
Is this the spirit of a soldier's wife?
Nay, fiery courage, iron fortitude,
That soul must own that dares to say, "I love."

MARIA.

And I dare say it. I can bear the worst
That envious fate may heap upon my head,
If thou art with me, or for hope of thee.

DON JOHN.

Art sure of that? Thou couldst not part from me,
Even for thy father's sake?

MARIA.

Talk you of parting?
For God's sake, what is this? You love no more?

DON JOHN.

Rather I love so truly that I shrink
From asking thee to share a soldier's fate.
I tremble to uproot so fine a flower
From its dear native earth. I—

MARIA (*putting her hand on his lips*).

Hush, no more!
I need no preparation more than this,
Your mere request.

DON JOHN.

There spake my heroine.
The King, my father, bids me to repair
Unto Palermo.

MARIA.

Shall we sail to-night?

DON JOHN.

My Princess! Thou recoilest not from all
Thou must endure, ere I can openly
Claim thee my wife!

MARIA.

The pangs of purgatory
Were lightly borne with such a heaven in view.
I were content with one brief hour a day,
Snatched from the toils of war and thy high duties,
To gaze on thy dear face — to feel thy hand,
Even as now a stay and a caress.

DON JOHN.

Angel, I have no thanks. May God forget me
When I forget this hour! So, thou art firm —
Ready this night to leave thy home, thy kin,
Thy father?

MARIA (*solemnly*).

I am ready and resolved.
Yet judge me not so lightly as to deem
I say this with no pang. My love were naught,
Could I withdraw it painlessly at once
From him round whose colossal strength the tendrils

Of mine own baby heart were taught to twine.
I speak not now as one who swerves or shrinks,
But merely, dear, to show thee what sharp tortures
I, nowise blind, but with deliberate soul,
Embrace for thee.

DON JOHN.

How can I doubt the anguish
So rude a snapping of all ties must smite
Thy tender heart withal? Yet, dwell we not
On the brief pain, but on the enduring joys.
If the Ribera's love be all thou deemest,
He will forgive thy secret flight, thy —

MARIA.

Secret!
May I not bid farewell? May I not tell him
Where we are bound? How soon he may have hope
To hear from me — to welcome me, thy Princess?
I dare not leave him without hope.

DON JOHN.

My child,
Thou art mad! We must be secret as the grave,
Else are we both undone. I have given out
That I depart in princely state to-morrow.
Far from the quay a bark awaiteth us.

I know my man. Shrouded by careful night,
We will set secret sail for Sicily.
Once in Palermo, thou mayst write thy father —
Sue for his pardon — tell him that, ere long,
When I have won by cautious policy
King Philip's favor, thou shalt be proclaimed
Princess of Austria.

MARIA (*who has hung upon his words with trembling excitement, covers her face with her hands, and burst into tears*).

I cannot! no! I cannot!

DON JOHN (*scornfully*).

I feared as much. Well, it is better thus.
I asked thee not to front the "worst of ills
That envious fate could heap upon thy head" —
Only a little patience. 'T was too much;
I cannot blame thee. 'T is a loving father.
I, a mere stranger, had naught else to hope,
Matching my claim with his.

MARIA (*looks at him and throws herself at his feet*).

Oh, pardon, pardon!
My Lord, my Prince, my husband! I am thine!
Lead wheresoe'er thou wilt, I follow thee.
Tell me a life's devotion may efface
The weakness of a moment!

DON JOHN (*raising her tenderly and embracing her*).

Ah, mine own!

SCENE III.

Morning. The Studio. Enter RIBERA.

RIBERA.

How laughingly the clear sun shines to-day
On storm-drenched green, and cool, far-glittering seas!
When she comes in to greet me, she will blush
For last night's terrors. How she crouched and shuddered
At the mere thought of the wild war without!
Poor, clinging women's souls, what need is theirs
Of our protecting love! Yet even on me
The shadow of the storm-cloud seemed to brood.
Through my vexed sleep I heard the thunder roll;
My dreams were ugly — Well, all that is past;
To-day my spirit is renewed. 'T is long
Since I have felt so fresh.

[*He seats himself before his easel and takes up his brush and palette, but holds them idly in his hand.*

Strange, she still sleeps!
The hour is past when she is wont to come
To bless me with the kiss of virgin love.
Mayhap 't was fever in her eyes last night
Gave them so wild a glance, so bright a lustre.
God! if she should be ill! [*He rises and calls.*
Luca!

Enter LUCA.

LUCA.

My lord?

RIBERA.

Go ask Fiametta if the mistress sleeps —
If she be ailing — why she has not come
This morn to greet me. [*Exit* LUCA.

RIBERA (*begins pacing the stage*).

What fond fears are these
Mastering my spirit? Since her mother died
I tremble at the name of pain or ill.
How can my rude love tend, my hard hand soothe,
The dear child's fragile —

[*A confused cry without.*

What is that? My God!
How hast thou stricken me!

[*He staggers and falls into a chair. Enter hastily* FIAMETTA, *weeping, and* LUCA *with gestures of terror and distress.*

FIAMETTA.

Master!

LUCA.

Dear master!

[RIBERA *rises with a great effort and confronts them.*

RIBERA.

What is it? Speak!

LUCA.

Dear master, she is gone.

RIBERA.

How? Murdered — dead? Oh, cruel God!
Away!
Follow me not! [*Exit* RIBERA.

FIAMETTA.

Help, all ye saints of heaven.
Have pity on him! Oh, what a day is this!

LUCA.

Quiet, Fiametta. When the master finds
The empty, untouched bed, the silent room,
His wits will leave him. Hark! was that his cry?

Reënter RIBERA *calling.*

RIBERA.

Maria! Daughter! Where have they taken thee,
My only one, my darling? Oh, the brigands!
Naples shall bleed for this. What do ye here,
Slaves, fools, who stare upon me? Know ye not
I have been robbed? Hence! Ransack every
house

From cave to roof in Naples. Search all streets.
Arrest whomso ye meet. Let no sail stir
From out the harbor. Ring the alarum! Quick!
This is a general woe.

[*Exeunt* LUCA *and* FIAMETTA.

The Duke 's my friend;
He 'll further me. The Prince — oh, hideous fear! —
No, no, I will not dream it. Mine enemies
Have done this thing; the avengers of that beggar —
Domenichino — they have struck home at last.
How was it that I heard no sound, no cry,
Throughout the night? The heavens themselves conspired
Against me — the hoarse thunder drowned her shrieks!
Oh, agony!

[*He buries his face in his hands. Enter* ANNICCA; *she throws herself speechless and weeping upon his neck.*

Thou knowest it, Annicca!
The thief has entered in the night — she 's gone.
I stand and weep; I stir not hand or foot.
Is not the household roused? Do they not seek her?
I am helpless, weak; an old man overnight.
The brigands' work was easy. I heard naught.
But surely, surely, had they murdered her,
I had heard that — that would have wakened me
From out my grave.

ANNICCA.

Father, she is not dead.

RIBERA (*wildly*).

Where have they found her? What dost thou know? Speak, speak,
Ere my heart break!

ANNICCA.

Alas! they have not found her;
But that were easy. Nerve thyself — remember
Thou art the Spagnoletto still. Last night
Don John fled secretly from Naples.

RIBERA.

Ah!
Give me a draught of water.

[*He sinks down on his chair.*

ANNICCA (*calling*).

Help, Tommaso!
Luca! Fiametta! Father, look up, look up!
Gaze not so hollowly.

Enter DON TOMMASO *and* SERVANTS.

Quick! water, water!
Do ye not see he swoons?

[*She kneels before her father, chafing and kissing his hands. Exit* LUCA, *who returns immediately with*

a silver flagon of water. ANNICCA *seizes it and raises it to* RIBERA'S *lips. He takes it from her hand and drinks.*

RIBERA.

How your hand trembles!
See, mine is firm. You had spilt it o'er my beard
Had I not saved it. Thanks. I am strong again.
I am very old for such a steady grasp.
Why, girl, most men as hoary as thy father
Are long since palsied. But my firm touch comes
From handling of the brush. I am a painter,
The Spagnoletto —

[*As he speaks his name he suddenly throws off his apathy, rises to his full height, and casts the flagon to the ground.*

Ah, the Spagnoletto,
Disgraced, abandoned! My exalted name
The laughing-stock of churls; my hearthstone stamped
With everlasting shame; my pride, my fame,
Mine honor — where are they? With yon spilt water,
Fouled in the dust, sucked by the thirsty air.
Now, by Christ's blood, my vengeance shall be huge
As mine affront. I will demand full justice
From Philip. We will treat as King with King.
He shall be stripped of rank and name and wealth,

Degraded, lopped from off the fellowship
Of Christians like a rotten limb, proclaimed
The bastard that he is. She shall go with him,
Linked in a common infamy, haled round,
A female Judas, who betrayed her father,
Her God, her conscience, with a kiss. Her shadow
Shall be my curse. Cursed be her sleep by night,
Accursed her light by day — her meat and drink!
Accursed the fruit of her own womb — the grave
Where she will lie! Cursed — Oh, my child, my child!

[*He throws himself on the floor and buries his head among the cushions of the couch.* DON TOMMASO *advances and lays his hand on* RIBERA'S *shoulder.*

DON TOMMASO.

Mine honored sir —

RIBERA (*looks up without rising*).

Surely you mock me, signor.
Honored! Yes, honored with a rifled home,
A desecrated hearth, a strumpet child.
For honors such as these, I have not stinted
Sweat, blood, or spirit through long years of toil.
I have passed through peril scathless; I was spared
When Naples was plague-stricken; I have 'scaped
Mine enemies' stiletto — fire and flood;
I have survived my love, my youth, my self,

My thrice-blest Leonora, whom I pitied,
Fool that I was! in her void, silent tomb.
The God of mercy hath reserved me truly
For a wise purpose.

ANNICCA.

Father, rise; take courage;
We know not yet the end.

RIBERA.

Why should I rise
To front the level eyes of men's contempt?
Oh, I am shamed! Cover my head, Annicca;
Darken mine eyes, and veil my face. Oh, God,
Would that I were a nameless, obscure man,
So could I bury with me my disgrace,
That now must be immortal. Where thou standest,
Annicca, there she stood last night. She kissed me;
Round mine old neck she wreathed her soft, young arms.
My wrinkled cheeks were wet with her warm tears.
She shuddered, and I thought it was the thunder
Struck terror through her soul. White-bearded fool!

FIAMETTA.

I found this scrip upon the chamber-floor,
Mayhap it brings some comfort.

RIBERA (*starts up and snatches the paper she offers him, reads it rapidly, then to* ANNICCA *wildly*).

Look, look there —
'T is writ in blood: "My duty to my lord
Forbids my telling you our present port."
I would track her down with sleuth-hounds, did I not
Abhor to see her face. Ah, press thy hands
Against my head — my brain is like to burst —
My throat is choked. Help! help!

[*He swoons.*

SCENE IV.

A Street. Enter LORENZO *and a* GENTLEMAN, *meeting. They salute, and* LORENZO *is about to pass on.*

LORENZO.

Good-morning, sir.

GENTLEMAN.

Hail and farewell so soon,
Friend dreamer? I will lay a goodly sum
The news that flies like fire from tongue to tongue
Hath not yet warmed thine ear.

LORENZO.

What 's that? I lay
A sum as fair thy news is some dry tale

Of courtly gossip, touching me as nigh
As the dissensions of the antipodes.

GENTLEMAN.

Done for a hundred florins! In the night,
'Midst the wild storm whose roar must have invaded
Even thy leaden sleep, Prince John left Naples.
We should have had a pageant here to-day,
A royal exit, floral arches thrown
From house to house in all the streets he passed,
Music and guards of honor, homage fitting
The son of Philip — but the bird has flown.

LORENZO.

So! I regret our busy citizens,
Who sun themselves day-long upon the quays,
Should be deprived of such a festival.
Your wager 's lost — how am I moved by this?

GENTLEMAN.

Hark to the end. 'T would move all men whose veins
Flow not clear water. He hath carried off
The Rose of Naples.

LORENZO.

What wouldst thou say? Speak out!
In God's name, who hath followed him?

GENTLEMAN.

Ah, thou 'rt roused.
Thy master hath been robbed — the Spagnoletto —
Maria of the Golden Locks — his daughter.

LORENZO.

How is this known? 'T is a foul slander forged
By desperate malice. What! in the night, you say? —
She whose bright name was clean as gold, whose heart
Shone a fixed star of loyal love and duty
Beside her father's glory! This coarse lie
Denies itself. I will go seek the master,
And if this very noon she walk not forth,
Led by the Spagnoletto, through the streets,
To blind the dazed eyes of her slanderers, —
I am your debtor for a hundred florins.

GENTLEMAN.

Your faith in womanhood becomes you, sir.
(*Aside.*) A beggar's child the mistress of a Prince;
Humph! there be some might think the weight of scandal
Lay on the other side. (*To Lorenzo.*) You need not forth

To seek her father. See, he comes, alone.
I will not meddle in this broil. Farewell!

[*Exit Gentleman.*

Enter RIBERA, *without hat or mantle, slowly, with folded arms and bent head.*

LORENZO.

Oh heart, break not for pity! Shall he thus
Unto all Naples blazon his disgrace?
This must not be (*advancing*). Father!

RIBERA (*starts and looks up sharply*).

Who calls me father?

LORENZO.

Why, master, I — you know me not? Lorenzo.

RIBERA.

Nor do I care to know thee. Thou must be
An arrant coward, thus to league with foes
Against so poor a wretch as I — to call me
By the most curst, despised, unhallowed name
God's creatures own. Away! and let me pass;
I injure no man.

LORENZO.

Look at me, dear master.
Your head is bare, your face is ashy pale,
The sun is fierce. I am your friend, your pupil;
Let me but guide my reverend master home,

In token of the grateful memory
Wherein I hold his guidance of my mind
Up the steep paths of art.

[*While* LORENZO *speaks,* RIBERA *slowly gains consciousness of his situation, raises his hand to his head, and shudders violently.* LORENZO'S *last words seem to awaken him thoroughly.*

RIBERA.

I crave your pardon
If I have answered roughly, Sir Lorenzo.
My thoughts were far away — I failed to know you —
I have had trouble, sir. You do remind me,
I had forgot my hat; that is a trifle,
Yet now I feel the loss. What slaves are we
To circumstance! One who is wont to cover
For fashion or for warmth his pate, goes forth
Bareheaded, and the sun will seem to smite
The shrinking spot, the breeze will make him shiver,
And yet our hatless beggars heed them not.
We are the fools of habit.

Enter two gentlemen together as promenading; they cross the stage, looking hard at RIBERA *and* LORENZO, *and exeunt.*

LORENZO.

Pray you, sir,
Let me conduct you home. Here is no place

To hold discourse. In God's name, come with me.

RIBERA.

What coupled staring fools were they that passed?
They seemed to scare thee. Why, boy, face them out.
I am the shadow of the Spagnoletto,
Else had I brooked no gaze so insolent.
Well, I will go with thee. But, hark thee, lad;
A word first in thine ear. 'T is a grim secret;
Whisper it not in Naples; I but tell thee,
Lest thou should fancy I had lost my wits.
My daughter hath deserted me — hath fled
From Naples with a bastard. Thou hast seen her,
Maria-Rosa — thou must remember her;
She, whom I painted as Madonna once.
She had fair hair and Spanish eyes. When was it?
I came forth thinking I might meet with her
And find all this a dream — a foolish thought!
I am very weary. (*Yawning.*) I have walked and walked
For hours. How far, sir, stand we from the Strada
Nardo? I live there, nigh Saint Francis' church.

LORENZO.

Why, 't is hard by; a stone's throw from this square.

So, lean on me — you are not well. This way.
Pluck up good heart, sir; we shall soon be there.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

Night. A Room in RIBERA'S *House.* ANNICCA *seated alone, in an attitude of extreme weariness and despondency.*

ANNICCA.

His heavy sleep still lasts. Despite the words
Of the physician, I can cast not off
That ghastly fear. Albeit he owned no drugs,
This deathlike slumber, this deep breathing slow,
His livid pallor makes me dread each moment
His weary pulse will cease. This is the end,
And from the first I knew it. The worst evil
My warning tongue had wrought were joy to this.
No heavier curse could I invoke on her
Than that she see him in her dreams, her thoughts,
As he is now. I could no longer bear it;
I have fled hither from his couch to breathe —
To quicken my spent courage for the end.
I cannot pray — my heart is full of curses.
He sleeps; he rests. What better could I wish
For his rent heart, his stunned, unbalanced brain,
Than sleep to be eternally prolonged?

Enter FIAMETTA. ANNICCA *looks up anxiously, half rising.*

ANNICCA.

How now? What news?

FIAMETTA.

The master is awake
And calls for you, signora.

ANNICCA.

Heaven be praised!
[*Exit hastily.*

FIAMETTA.

Would I had followed my young mistress! Here
I creep about like a scared, guilty thing,
And fancy at each moment they will guess
'T was I who led her to the hut. I will confess,
If any sin there be, to Father Clement,
And buy indulgence with her golden chain.
'T would burn my throat, the master's rolling eyes
Would haunt me ever, if I went to wear it.
So, all will yet be well. [*Exit.*

SCENE VI.

RIBERA'S *Room.* RIBERA *discovered sitting on the couch. He looks old and haggard, but has regained his natural bearing and expression. Enter* ANNICCA. *She hastens towards him, and kneels beside the couch, kissing him affectionately.*

ANNICCA.

Father, you called me?

RIBERA.

Aye, to bid good-night.
Why do you kiss me? To betray to-morrow?

ANNICCA.

Dear father, you are better; you have slept.
Are you not rested?

RIBERA.

Child, I was not weary.
There was some cloud pressed here (*pointing to his forehead*) but that is past.
I have no pain nor any sense of ill.
Now, while my brain is clear, I have a word
To speak. I think not I have been to thee,
Nor to that other one, an unkind father.
I do not now remember any act,
Or any word of mine, could cause thee grief.
But I am old — perchance my memory
Deceives in this? Speak! Am I right, Annicca?

ANNICCA (*weeping*).

Oh, father, father, why will you torture me?
You were too good, too good.

RIBERA.

Why, so I thought.
Since it appears the guerdon of such goodness
Is treachery, abandonment, disgrace,

I here renounce my fatherhood. No child
Will I acknowledge mine. Thou art a wife;
Thy duty is thy husband's. When Antonio
Returns from Seville, tell him that his father
Is long since dead. Henceforward I will own
No kin, no home, no tie. I will away,
To-morrow morn, and live an anchorite.
One thing ye cannot rob me of — my work.
My name shall still outsoar these low, mirk vapors —
Not the Ribera, stained with sin and shame,
As she hath left it, but the Spagnoletto.
My glory is mine own. I have done with it,
But I bequeath it to my country. Now
I will make friends with beasts — they 'll prove less savage
Than she that was my daughter. I have spoken
For the last time that word. Thee I curse not;
Thou hast not set thy heel upon my heart;
But yet I will not bless thee. Go. Good-night.

ANNICCA (*embracing him*).

What! will you spurn me thus? Nay, I will bide,
And be to thee all that she should have been,
Soothe thy declining years, and heal the wound
Of this sharp sorrow. Thou shalt bless me still,
Father —

[RIBERA *has yielded for a moment to her embrace; but, suddenly rising, he pushes her roughly from him.*

RIBERA.

Away! I know thee. Thou art one
With her who duped me with like words last night.
Then I believed; but now my sense is closed,
My heart is dead as stone. I cast thee forth.
By heaven, I own thee not! Thou dost forget
I am the Spagnoletto. Away, I say,
Or ere I strike thee. [*He threatens her.*

ANNICCA.

Woe is me! Help, help!
[*Exit.*

RIBERA.

So, the last link is snapt. Had I not steeled
My heart, I fain had kissed her in farewell.
'T is better so. I leave my work unfinished.
Could I arise each day to face this spectre,
Or sleep with it at night? — to yearn for her
Even while I curse her? No! The dead remain
Sacred and sweet in our remembrance still;
They seem not to have left us; they abide
And linger nigh us in the viewless air.
The fallen, the guilty, must be rooted out
From heart and thought and memory. With them
No hope of blest reunion; they must be
As though they had not been; their spoken name

Cuts like a knife. When I essay to think
Of what hath passed to-day, my sick brain reels.
The letter I remember, but all since
Floats in a mist of horror, and I grasp
No actual form. Did I not wander forth?
A mob surrounded me. All Naples knew
My downfall, and the street was paved with eyes
That stared into my soul. Then friendly hands
Guided me hither. When I woke, I felt
As though a stone had rolled from off my brain.
But still this nightmare bides the truth. I know
They watch me, they suspect me. I will wait
Till the whole household sleep, and then steal forth,
Nor unavenged return.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A Room in DON TOMMASO'S *House.* ANNICCA *discovered, attired in mourning. Enter* DON TOMMASO.

DON TOMMASO.

If he still live, now shall we hear of him.
The news I learn will lure him from his covert,
Where'er it lie, to pardon or avenge.

ANNICCA (*eagerly*).

What news? What cheer, Tommaso?

DON TOMMASO.

Meagre cheer,
But tidings that break through our slow suspense,
Like the first thunder-clap in sultry air.
Don John sets sail from Sicily, to wed
A Princess chosen by the King. Maria —

ANNICCA.

Talk not of her — I know her not; her name
Will sear thy tongue. Think'st thou, in truth, this news
Will draw my father from his hiding-place?
No — teach me not to hope, Within my heart
A sure voice tells me he is dead. Not his
The spirit to drag out a shameful life,
To shrink from honest eyes, to sink his brow
Unto the dust, here where he wore his crown.
Thou knowest him. Have I not cause to mourn
Uncomforted, that he, the first of fathers,
Self-murdered — nay, child-murdered — Oh, Tommaso,
I would fare barefoot to the ends of the earth
To look again upon his living face,
See in his eyes the light of love restored —
Not blasting me with lightnings as before —
To kneel to him, to solace him, to win

For mine own head, yoked in my sister's curse
The blessing he refused me.

DON TOMMASO.

Well, take comfort;
This grace may yet be thine.

SCENE II.

Palermo. A Nunnery. Enter ABBESS, *followed by a Lay-Sister.*

ABBESS.

Is the poor creature roused?

LAY-SISTER.

Nay, she still sleeps.
'T would break your pious heart to see her, mother.
She begged our meanest cell, though 't is past doubt
She has been bred to delicate luxury.
I deemed her spent, had not the soft breast heaved
As gently as a babe's and even in dreams
Two crystal drops oozed from her swollen lids,
And trickled down her cheeks. Her grief sleeps not,
Although the fragile body craves its rest.

ABBESS.

Poor child! I fear she hath sore need of prayer.
Hath she yet spoken?

LAY-SISTER.

Only such scant words
Of thanks or answer as our proffered service
Or questionings demand. When we are silent,
Even if she wake, she seemeth unaware
Of any presence. She will sit and wail,
Rocking upon the ground, with dull, wide eyes,
Wherefrom the streaming tears unceasing course;
The only sound that then escapes her lips
Is, "Father, Father!" in such piteous strain
As though her rent heart bled to utter it.

ABBESS.

Still she abides then by her first request
To take the black veil and its vows to-morrow?

LAY-SISTER.

Yea, to that purpose desperately she clings.
This evening, if she rouse, she makes confession.
Even now a holy friar waits without,
Fra Bruno, of the order of Carthusians,
Beyond Palermo.

ABBESS.

I will speak with him,
Ere he confess her, since we know him not.
Follow me, child, and see if she have waked.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A Cell in the Nunnery. MARIA *discovered asleep on a straw pallet. She starts suddenly from her sleep with a little cry, half rises and remains seated on her pallet.*

MARIA.

Oh, that wild dream! My weary bones still ache
With the fierce pain; they wrenched me limb from limb.
Thou hadst full cause, my father. But thou, Juan,
What was my sin to thee, save too much love?
Oh, would to God my back were crooked with age,
My smooth cheek seamed with wrinkles, my bright hair
Hoary with years, and my quick blood impeded
By sluggish torpor, so were I near the end
Of woes that seem eternal! I am strong —
Death will not rescue me. Within my veins
I feel the vigorous pulses of young life,
Refusing my release. My heart at times

Rebels against the habit of despair,
And, ere I am aware, has wandered back,
Among forbidden paths. What prayer, what penance,
Will shrive me clean before the sight of Heaven?
My hands are black with parricide. Why else
Should his dead face arise three nights before me,
Bleached, ghastly, dripping as of one that 's drowned,
To freeze my heart with horror? Christ, have mercy!

[*She covers her face with her hands in an agony of despair.*

Enter a MONK.

THE MONK.

May peace be in this place!

[MARIA *shudders violently at the sound of his voice; looks up and sees the* MONK *with bent head, and hands partially extended, as one who invokes a blessing. She rises, falls at his feet, and takes the hem of his skirt between her hands, pressing it to her lips.*

Welcome, thrice welcome!
Bid me not rise, nor bless me with pure hands.
Ask not to see my face. Here let me lie,
Kissing the dust — a cast-away, a trait'ress,
A murderess, a parricide!

MONK.

Accursed
With all Hell's curses is the crime thou nam'st!

What devil moved thee? Who and whence art thou,
That wear'st the form of woman, though thou lack'st
The heart of the she-wolf? Who was thy parent,
What fiend of torture, that thine impious hands
Should quench the living source of thine own life?

MARIA.

Spare me! oh, spare me! Nay, my hands are clean.
He was the first, best, noblest among men.
I was his light, his soul, his breath of life.
These I withdrew from him, and made his days
A darkness. Yet, perchance he is not dead,
And blood and tears may wash away my guilt.
Oh, tell me there is hope, though it gleam far —
One solitary ray, one steadfast spark,
Beyond a million years of purgatory!
My burning soul thirsts for the dewy balm
Of comfortable grace. One word, one word,
Or ere I perish of despair!

MONK.

What word?
The one wherewith thou bad'st thy father hope?
What though he be not dead? Is breathing life?
Hast thou not murdered him in spirit? dealt

The death-blow to his heart? Cheat not thy soul
With empty dreams — thy God hath judged thee guilty!

MARIA.

Have pity, father! Let me tell thee all.
Thou, cloistered, holy and austere, know'st not
My glittering temptations. My betrayer
Was of an angel's aspect. His were all gifts,
All grace, all seeming virtue. I was plunged,
Deaf, dumb, and blind, and hand-bound in the deep.
If a poor drowning creature craved thine aid,
Thou wouldst not spurn it. Such a one am I,
And all the waves roll over me. Help, help!
Let me not perish! Wrest me from my doom!
Say not that I am lost!

MONK.

I can but say
What the just Spirit prompts. Myself am naught
To pardon or condemn. The sin is sinned;
The fruit forbid is tasted, yea, and pressed
Of its last honeyed juices. Wilt thou now
Escape the after-bitterness with prayers,
Scourgings, and wringings of the hands? Shall these
Undo what has been done? — make whole the heart

Thy crime hath snapt in twain? — restore the wits
Thy sin hath scattered? No! Thy punishment
Is huge as thine offence. Death shall not help,
Neither shall pious life wash out the stain.
Living thou 'rt doomed, and dead, thou shalt be lost,
Beyond salvation.

MARIA (*springing to her feet*).

Impious priest, thou liest!
God will have mercy — as my father would,
Could he but see me in mine agony!

[*The* MONK *throws back his cowl and discovers himself as the* SPAGNOLETTO. MARIA *utters a piercing cry and throws herself speechless at his feet.*

RIBERA.

Thou know'st me not. I am not what I was.
My outward shape remains unchanged; these eyes,
Now gloating on thine anguish, are the same
That wept to see a shadow cross thy brow;
These ears, that drink the music of thy groans,
Shrank from thy lightest sigh of melancholy.
Thou think'st to find the father in me still?
Thy parricidal hands have murdered him —
Thou shalt not find a man. I am the spirit
Of blind revenge — a brute, unswerving force.
What deemest thou hath bound me unto life?
Ambition, pleasure, or the sense of fear?

What, but the sure hope of this fierce, glad hour,
That I might track thee down to this — might see
Thy tortured body writhe beneath my feet,
And blast thy stricken spirit with my curse?

MARIA (*in a crushed voice*).

Have mercy! mercy!

RIBERA.

Yes, I will have mercy —
The mercy of the tiger or the wolf,
Athirst for blood.

MARIA (*terror-struck, rises upon her knees in an attitude of supplication.* RIBERA *averts his face*).

Oh, father, kill me not!
Turn not away — I am not changed for thee!
In God's name, look at me — thy child, thine own!
Spare me, oh, spare me, till I win of Heaven
Some sign of promise! I am lost forever
If I die now.

RIBERA (*looks at her in silence, then pushing her from him laughs bitterly*).

Nay, have no fear of me.
I would not do thee that much grace to ease thee
Of the gross burden of the flesh. Behold,
Thou shalt be cursed with weary length of days;
And when thou seek'st to purge thy guilty heart,

Thou shalt find there a sin no prayer may
shrive —
The murder of thy father. To all dreams
That haunt thee of past anguish, shall be added
The vision of this horror!

[*He draws from his girdle a dagger and stabs himself to the heart; he falls and dies, and* MARIA *flings herself, swooning, upon his body.*

THE END.

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